

THE PANJAB PAST AND PRESENT

Vol. XXXVI.-Part-II

October, 2005

Serial No. 72



**PUBLICATION BUREAU
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**

THE PANJAB PAST AND PRESENT

Vol.XXXVII-Part-II

October, 2005

Serial No.72



**PUBLICATION BUREAU
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**



NATURE OF LAND RIGHTS IN THE PRE-COLONIAL PUNJAB: A STUDY OF THE TENANCY DOCUMENTS

- Tripta Wahi*

The first regular settlement of the Punjab after its annexation to the British territory in 1846 and 1849 was made in the early eighteen-fifties. Notwithstanding the fact that the entire issue of land-holdings was found to be 'an exceedingly complicated and difficult one',¹ the settlement accorded the status of *maurisi*, that is, 'hereditary occupancy tenants' to the cultivators who had cultivated their lands for upwards of twelve years and had generally discharged revenue obligations to the state at par with the 'proprietors'.² A large number of these 'occupancy tenants' were recorded as paying either a very small or no rent,³ described variously as *malikana*, *biswi*, *ismee*, *seerman*.⁴ The remaining cultivators acquired the status of *ghair-maurisi*, tenants-at-will, who could be evicted by the landlord at any time.

In 1863 the entire issue of hereditary occupancy rights was reopened by Edward Prinsep when he was appointed the Commissioner of the Settlements for supervising the revised settlement of the three districts comprising the Amritsar division, namely Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Sialkot. Prinsep came to view the first recording of the occupancy rights as full of 'numerous and grave errors'. He believed that occupancy rights had been 'manufactured' by the British revenue settlement⁵ and he, therefore, persisted in 'rectifying' the mistakes of the first settlement. Determined to undo 'tremendous injustice' to the 'proprietors' done by the first settlement, Prinsep persisted in reopening the entire issue of the occupancy rights of the hereditary tenants which formed the basis of the first revenue settlement despite serious legal and political objections by the government.

Prinsep did all that was in his power to give effect to his views on the issue.⁶ His persistence led to endless enquiry committees and discussions on the issue of tenants' rights before the first settlement; information on the

* Department of History, Hindu College, Delhi University, North Campus, Delhi.

1. 'Minute of the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab on tenant Right and the proposed Bill', *Papers connected with the question of Tenant Right in the Punjab: Selections from Records of the Government of the Punjab*, Lahore 1869, p.496. For the sake of convenience all references to the tenancy documents are from this published volume. Henceforth it would be cited as *Tenant Right in the Punjab*.

2. *Ibid.*, pp.53,497.

3. *Loc.cit.*

4. *Ibid.*, p.549, no.4, *passim*.

5. *Ibid.*, p.204, para 65.

6. *Ibid.*, pp.498,542-59.

subject was sought from all quarters, namely, the 'native gentry', 'native officials', different land-holding and cultivating communities besides the British officials from all over the Punjab.⁷ This exercise lasted for more than five years till the Punjab Tenancy Act was passed in October 1868. Most of the documents pertaining to this debate were put together and published by the Punjab Government as the *Papers connected with the question of Tenant Right in the Punjab. Selections from records of the Government of the Punjab*⁸. It is these documents that form the basis of the present article. The main issue of the debate was whether the 'proprietor' had the right to evict his 'tenant', particularly a tenant of long standing. The tenancy documents contain remarkable information on the nature of land-holdings and social relations in the pre-colonial Punjab. From the issues raised in the debate, we are able to extract invaluable pieces of information, which enable us to raise new questions in the entire debate of land rights and social relations in the pre-colonial times in the Indian sub-continent. These questions put the entire debate in a new perspective.

While evaluating the evidence of the tenancy documents, the author is fully conscious of Prinsep's bias towards the 'proprietary class'. It is also not surprising that the assessor's verdict or opinion of committees which sought information from agriculturists of all categories and communities, invariably upheld the views of the proprietors.⁹ However, what is significant from our point of view is the fact that generally claims by the contending parties were not put forward in terms of proprietary rights. To support their contesting positions both sides adduced as evidence an array of facts based on the exercise of certain rights or their absence in the pre-British times. It is from this evidence that an attempt has been made to draw our inferences on the issue under discussion. While specific factual details were invariably disputed, but not the fact that the exercise of those rights constituted the criteria for evaluating their contesting claims and, thereby, the nature of their holdings in the pre-British times. There was a remarkable consensus concerning the conditions and issues on which these rights were predicated. From our perspective it is this evidence that contains a mine of valuable information on the nature of land holdings and social relations in the pre-colonial Punjab.

The first categorical distinction among cultivators in the pre-

7. A history of the entire issue has been succinctly outlined in a minute on the subject of tenant rights in the Punjab by the Lt. Governor of the Punjab, *ibid.*, pp.496-514; See also Andrew J. Major, 'Land Revenue and Peasant Protection in Early British Punjab, *Five Punjabi Centuries: Polity, Economy, Society and Culture*, ed. Indu Banga, Delhi 1977, pp.320-26.

8. They were published from Lahore in 1896; all references to tenancy documents in this paper are from this volume.

9. See, for instance, the views of the committees from Batala and Amritsar on question numbers 7 to 9, pp. 71-72, 81-82; see also, p.608 for likely biases of assessors.

colonial times was based on the fact of their residence or non-residence in the village. This emerges clearly from the replies of all 'land lords' and 'tenants' in all three districts in which enquiries were made. These enquiries are corroborated from the reports which are quoted in the *Tenant Right in the Punjab* from other parts of the Punjab. These replies were in response to a question asking 'What name was given to those tenants who were liable to be *ejected* after any harvest by the proprietors and what to those whom it was not customary to eject and what difference is there between the two classes?'¹⁰ This question was obviously framed in view of the categories of occupancy tenants and tenants-at-will created by the revenue settlement made by the British and Prinsep's contention that in the pre-British times the 'proprietors' had the right to evict any cultivator. Trying to seek information on the issue, which vertically divided the entire British establishment across the board, they were unable to get clear answers on those two categories. It was the general opinion of all that these clearly defined categories of tenants were the creation of the British system and that the same were unknown in the earlier times.¹¹ It was explicitly stated that 'excepting the *pahees*, no other class was distinct enough to receive a name'.¹² They were distinguished by the fact that they did not reside in the village. The term is derived from *pai* (foot) implying that the *paheekasht* came walking from outside the village. It is important to note that by and large the only two distinct categories of cultivators, namely, the *paheekasht* or non-resident cultivator and the *asamee*, the resident cultivator, that were stated to have been in existence in the pre-British times were based on the fact of residence or non-residence of the cultivator in the village. Known also as *upari*, '*oopra*', '*ooprahoo*' and *pahi*,¹³ the *paheekasht* was not seen as entitled to any protection of this tenancy both by the land-lords and the cultivators; he could be evicted by the land-lord at any time, was the verdict.¹⁴ Yet what is remarkable is the fact that even within this category there were cultivators who had inherited their occupancy/cultivation from their fathers or grand-fathers.¹⁵

There is substantial evidence to suggest that there was a wide range within the category of non-resident cultivators themselves; they could cultivate a field for a season or they could cultivate from generation to generation. In certain areas it was noted that '*oopra*' or '*oprahoo*' till one crop and then disappear. They were distinguished from the *pahikasht* as coming from a distance.¹⁶ Those who held their cultivation from generation

10. This was question number 4, see *ibid.*, pp.68,80.

11. *Ibid.*, pp.67,79,87,105 and *passim*.

12. *Ibid.*, pp.51,69,80,81,90,92,105 and *passim*.

13. *Ibid.*, p.118.

14. *Ibid.*, pp.69, 80-81,91,106 and *passim*.

15. Opinion of the committee to question number 4, *ibid.*, p.69.

16. *Ibid.*, p.118.

to generation were likely to have been resident cultivators of the neighbouring villages. In fact, Prinsep refers to *pahikasht* cultivators as residing in neighbouring villages.¹⁷ In such cases of hereditary *paheekasht* from neighbouring villages they could have been attached to particular families. But in general the *pahis* were not attached to particular lands or proprietors;¹⁸ their lands were constantly changed by the *kardars*, that is, the government officials, village officials or individual landholders.¹⁹ The *pahikasht* was liable to pay extra cesses which absolved him of being called on *begari*;²⁰ he paid the *kankut* at a little higher rate than the resident cultivator.²¹ The *pahikasht* could have partnership in cultivation.²² Even a *sepi*, that is, an artisan from service castes, could have shared *paheekasht*. In a case from Mahal Kuler Mangat from Amritsar district we find a carpenter with two *paheekasht* cultivators one of whom was his brother.²³

As for the resident cultivators known generally by the nomenclature *asamee*, but occasionally also called *kriska*, *wahik* and *vasee*,²⁴ length of their tenure was the first and foremost factor that was taken into consideration for determining their position in the revenue settlement made by the British Government. Hence, their length of occupancy was fully ascertained. There is overwhelming evidence to show that a huge number of cultivators had been cultivating from generation to generation. Undoubtedly the right to cultivate was inheritable. It is noteworthy that even the officials and others who held the view that the land-lords had the right to evict their tenants also admitted that the right was seldom exercised.²⁵ Even Prinsep conceded that position.²⁶ There are two apparently contradictory situations pertaining to the *asamee*. On the one hand the cultivator's right to cultivate was inheritable and on the other hand there is an overview that there was no legal binding on the *malik* to keep the cultivator on his land.²⁷ The landholding class supported its position by giving evidence that they had been changing the fields of their cultivators from time to time and hence they possessed the legal right to evict them.²⁸ This was stated to be the customary position. Their ultimate argument in support of their right to evict their tenants came from the fact that they had in the first place 'located' the cultivator. But the right to evict the *asamee* family invariably had a

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 208.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

20. In Hoshiarpur the *pahikasht* was paying 'sereene', p. 51, that is 2/3 seers in a maund which absolved him from being called for 'begaree', *Ibid.*, p. 51; see also p. 80.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 175, numbers 71, 75.

23. *Ibid.*, *khuteonee* number 59, serial numbers 3 and 4.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 391.

25. *Ibid.*, reply to question no. 1, pp. 54, 67.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118, 365 (para 3).

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 67-68, 92, 94, 105, 106 and *passim*.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

condition attached to it and that was that the land was required for landlord's own use.²⁹ To this extent the cultivators too acknowledged the right of the *malik*. Conversely, the cultivators' enjoyment of their right to cultivate was dependent on their continued subordination to the land-holder; no defiance, insubordination or insolence was acceptable.³⁰

Prinsep's argument was that the landlords had the legal right to evict their tenants and, therefore, the occupancy rights created by the revenue settlement were untenable. This legal right, according to Prinsep, flowed from their being the proprietors of their lands. He argued at length that private property existed in land³¹ with the land-lords having the rights of lease, mortgage and eviction. Under Prinsep's supervision three out of every four cultivators lost their right of occupancy which had been granted to them at the first revenue settlement.³² What is significant from our perspective is not the fact that three in every four cultivators lost their privileged position under Prinsep, but that one in every four was retained in his status as occupancy tenant. From amongst 60,000 occupancy holders, 15,500 were 'discovered' to be of 'tenant-right' description.³³ Out of these 15,500 cultivators who were confirmed in their status of occupancy tenants, 3000 held their title by a judicial order of court given at the first settlement and another 4,000 by a similar order obtained in contested suits during the second settlement.³⁴ Therefore, out of 15,500 cases Prinsep did not have the power to alter the status of 7,000 cultivators because of judicial orders. He personally acceded the status only to 8,500 cultivators. After the settlement Prinsep justified his position of having re-opened the entire issue on the ground that only one in four had been retained in occupancy tenancy. That one in every four retained in occupancy tenancy is highly significant from the point of view of the nature of land-holdings in the pre-colonial Punjab. The significance of this was immediately grasped by the anti-Prinsep lobby for arguing their case for passing the Punjab Tenancy Bill. In the debate on the Bill in the Legislative Council on 19 October, 1868 a member remarked that 'the most violent partisans' of the theory that the occupancy rights did not exist in the pre-British times 'have now been compelled to relinquish it, for after the most stringent revision of the Amritsar Settlement 15,000 occupancy tenants remained on the record, which is a conclusive admission of the existence of the tenure before the conquest'.³⁵ The confirmation even of a small number in their status of the first settlement undermined Prinsep's own position on absolute and indefeasible property in land in the pre-British

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 56,67,70,88-89,169 (no.63), 170, 304.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 69,70,88,93.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-13.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-08.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

34. *Loc.cit.*

35. H.S.Maine, *ibid.*, p.655.

times. It is the principle of retention and not the numbers that take us to the nature of land-holdings and social relations in the pre-British Punjab.

Prinsep explains that 8,500 cultivators who privileged position was retained by him was based on the consent of both parties.³⁶ Also of the occupancy tenants of the first settlement, 1253 were raised to the superior status of proprietorship by consent.³⁷ How did it happen? What was the basis of their consent? These questions take us to issues beyond the mere length of occupancy in understanding the nature of land-holdings in the pre-colonial Punjab. In the process of giving evidence both sides brought a host of factors and issues beyond the mere length of occupancy to support their claims.

The criterion of measurement of their claims includes the relationship of the cultivating family to the first clearing of the site (*abadkaran*) leading to the establishment of the village and the land being brought under cultivation.³⁸ The cultivators who were the initial clearers of the soil for cultivation were known by several names which indicated their relationship with the original settlement. The name could be indicative of the cultivators being the initial settlers or of the kind of land that had been cleared or of the implements that had been used in clearing the land. The terms used are *mudlee* (from the founding), *bootamar* (literally thrashers/removers of shrubs), *bootashikaf* (splitter of plants), *luthband* (band of stick/rod holders/wielders), *banjar shifagan* (clearers of waste land).³⁹ All of them are described as original settlers or cultivators who had cleared the soil.⁴⁰ There is abundant evidence to show that such cultivators enjoyed superior status and privileged position in comparison to others including those who were located on developed land. Prinsep himself was of the view that the right of eviction was seldom exercised in the case of resident cultivators who had held land from generation to generation from the founding of the village.⁴¹ The rights of original settlers/clearers in turn were linked to several other conditions such as whether the cultivators had applied for reclaiming waste land or they had been invited to break up wastelands, whether they had rendered labour free of cost or had received payment for it, whether they had been located by the agents of the state or superior land-holding class, so on and so forth. Depending on specific conditions, their privileges could vary from holding the land on light assessment for a number of years to gradually acquiring proprietary rights.⁴²

36. *Ibid.*, p.207.

37. *Loc.cit.*

38. *Ibid.*, pp.42,53,55,56,57,58,61,92-93,94 (Byj Nath's reply to question no.7), 572 (no.24).

39. *Ibid.*, pp.42,48,55,56,57,60,61,68,91,260,323,371,374,384,396,397.

40. *Loc.cit.*

41. *Ibid.*, p.42, nos. 2 and 3, pp.117-18,365 (no.3).

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 40,42,60,61,134,309,318,374.

It is quite remarkable that in certain places the first plougher was entitled to sell his *kasht*, that is, the right to cultivate.⁴³ On the banks of the rivers Jhelum, Chenab and the Indus, where the *kardars* had located the *bootamar*, the latter acquired proprietary rights'.⁴⁴ The fact of breaking up the land was so important that being a *moodlee* could lead to an exception even in the case of a *choohra* (sweeper), who otherwise from his being a member of the lowliest of the service castes had no claims to any rights whatsoever.⁴⁵

Another component that formed part of the criterion for determining the hereditary cultivator's rights was whether the cultivator had the right to plant and cut trees in the pre-British times. While there was a part of a question specifically seeking information on the cultivators' right to plant trees,⁴⁶ its exercise or absence of its exercise was being continuously invoked by cultivators and land-lords in support of their disputed claims.⁴⁷ There were varying degrees of rights on planting, but more specifically on cutting trees and the use that the timber from the cut tree could be put to by the cultivator.⁴⁸ The degree of variation of rights depended upon a host of factors such as the length of cultivator's occupancy,⁴⁹ whether the trees adversely affected the productivity of the soil or not, the circumstances in which a cultivator had come to take up cultivation, whether trees were on his field or not etc.⁵⁰

Cultivators of long standing usually had the right to cut trees for agricultural purposes, such as ploughs and well gears;⁵¹ sometimes they could use it for roof beams, but for no other purposes.⁵² Generally for planting trees the cultivator had to seek land-holder's permission and while he had the right of usage of timber for specified purposes, he did not have the right to mortgage or sell the trees.⁵³ In certain circumstances the cultivator could sell the tree, but the *malik* was entitled to one-third of the timber or its value.⁵⁴ It is important to bear in mind that while the degree of

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 280, 394-95, 678.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 133, exception numbers 12 and 13, p. 134; number 3, pp. 91-92, 304-24; replies to question number 3, pp. 309, 374.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 134, exception no. 19.

46. Question number eight goes like this 'Can the tenant improve his holding, that is, can he sink a well or plant trees?' p. 72.

47. *Ibid.*, see for instance, the 'Attested Statement of Land-lord and Tenant', Mahal Choranwala, No. 263, Pargana Batala, District Gurdaspur, *khuteonee* numbers, 1, 4, 7, 10, 12, pp. 165-66, 260; Dewan Dya Shankar's reply to question number 2, p. 316.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 40, 81, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94 and *passim*.

49. *Loc. cit.*

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 94, 95, 107 and *passim*.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 112. Arising out of these conditions, the first revenue settlement had down clearly stipulated regulation pertaining to the use of timber of cultivators, p. 14, regulation no. XV.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 81, 95 and *passim*.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

right was contested,⁵⁵ but not the fact that the right itself was an indicator of the nature of their land-holdings. While the *asamee* had varying degrees of rights of planting and cutting trees and using timber thereof, the *paheekasht* had no right concerning trees.

It is quite remarkable that the minutely defined rights embraced rights over manure too. The *koora* (household refuse) of the non-agriculturist residents, that is the *kamin* (village servants) and the *sepi* (artisans) belonged to the land-lords, who could use it as manure.⁵⁶ However, the land-lord had no right over the *koora* of the *asamee* household and the *asamee* had no claims to the *koora* of the non-agriculturist residents.⁵⁷ This was carefully laid down even in the regulations made during the first settlement.⁵⁸ The *asamee* was entitled to using his *koora* to manure, but he did not have the right to take his *koora* beyond the confines of his village, and under no circumstances, without the permission of the land-lord.⁵⁹ The *asamee* of long-standing could have his own dung heaps.⁶⁰ The *bootamar* could place their manure (*koora*) on their own fields out of village site.⁶¹ It may be noted that indulgence for some lenient terms was shown to the tenants who had manured their lands even at the time of the second settlement.⁶² In any event in the case of the manured land, a cultivator could not be ejected until after the harvest.⁶³ Further, since cultivators were not entitled to carrying their *koora* outside their village, it may be safely inferred that the *paheekasht* could not have carried his manure to another village.

The mode of payment of the land-revenue was another constituent of measuring rights over land. Both sides supported their claims by adducing evidence from their methods of payment of land revenue in the pre-British times. The issues concerning the land revenue revolved around the questions whether a cultivator had been paying directly to the agents of the ruling power or not, whether he had paid the assessed revenue (*jama*), whether he had paid in cash or in kind, whether he had paid at concessional rate, or not. Thus, for instance, in their claims in the district of Gurdaspur, various cultivators have stated that they were paying the 'jumma rates' in the earlier times⁶⁴ and the proprietors have accepted that the cultivators had been

55. *Loc.cit.*

56. *Ibid.*, pp.9,71.

57. *Ibid.*, pp.71,72,89.

58. *Ibid.*, p.13.

59. *Ibid.*, pp.71,72,81,90; See also the regulation laid down by the new settlement, p.13.

60. *Ibid.*, pp.91,93,95.

61. *Ibid.*, p.40.

62. See, for instance, *khuteonee* no.1, verdict of assessors, *ibid.*, p.165.

63. *Ibid.*, p.326.

64. *Ibid.*, 'Attested statement of land-lord and tenant in Mehal Choran Wala', no.263, *khuteonee* numbers 1,4,7,9, pp.165-66.

paying in cash. However, the proprietors were not ready to concede that the cultivators had the right to pay in cash. In response to the question 'was there ever in former times a class of tenants who *paid in cash*, and were entitled to claim to pay in that way, if so, when, and under what regime?'⁶⁵, the proprietors' reply was that in former times in general there was no cash assessment, but if it did happen, it was done through them.⁶⁶ It is to be noted that they were very anxious to state that it was their prerogative to decide whether the cultivator paid in cash or in kind.⁶⁷ It is quite apparent that payment by cultivators in cash was indicative of some superior rights in some way or the other. Those who paid in money rates and were responsible for their own revenue demand were not liable to be dispossessed.⁶⁸ Indeed, it was being argued by some 'native' officials that during the Sikh period the revenue paid even in kind was 'most excessive' and hence 'the cultivators should not lose consideration because they paid in kind'.⁶⁹ The 'proprietors' were not ready to accept that the cultivators had the right to pay in cash during the pre-British times, but the fact that a section of cultivators was paying in cash cannot be denied although conditionalities such as *patta* and *qabuliyat* might have been applicable.⁷⁰

As was the case with payment in cash, similarly the cultivator paying directly to the state whether in kind or in cash was deemed to be in possession of rights which gave him superior claim over the land he cultivated. It was noted that in former times the tenures of cultivators were distinguished by the incident of who fixed their revenue rates. The revenue rates could be fixed directly by the authority of the state or the same could be mutually fixed between the cultivator and the land-lord without the intervention of any authority. Where the state directly imposed revenue rates on the cultivators, their land tenures precluded the right of ejection by the proprietors.⁷¹ It is noted that hereditary cultivators, like the proprietors paid according to the village rate fixed by the ruling power. However, their numbers seem to have been small. In the Amritsar district the extent of land in which the cultivators had been paying according to the village rate did not exceed ten percent of the total cultivated area.⁷²

For the cultivators the most prized rights in land accrued from repairing or sinking a well. Sinking and/or repairing wells emerges as the single most important component of measuring the rights of hereditary cultivators on their land. This information is found in almost all settlement

65. *Ibid.*, Question number 10, pp. 72-73, 81-82.

66. *Ibid.*, p.73,82.

67. *Loc.cit.*

68. *Ibid.*, p.63.

69. *Ibid.*, p.96.

70. *Ibid.*, pp.96-97.

71. Abstract from a report of the Gurgaon district, *ibid.*, p.55.

72. *Ibid.*, p.117.

reports cited in the tenancy documents from all over the Punjab as well as in the specific enquiries concerning the issue. The 'proprietors', 'cultivators', 'native gentry', 'native officials' and the British officials all give vital information on the subject from one angle or another. There is concurrence of opinion among all that even the hereditary cultivator did not have the right to repair or sink wells.⁷³ This right was closely and resolutely guarded by the *malik*. Yet there is equal amount of evidence to show that the hereditary cultivators did repair or sink wells, presumably with the permission of the *malik* or the ruler of the day. Whatever the circumstances in which the hereditary cultivator sank/repared a well, the fact of his having done so gave him some rights in the land which were qualitatively different from and superior to his right to hereditary cultivation. The cultivators who sank wells were generally allowed to remain in 'undisturbed possession'⁷⁴ and 'by the custom of the country led to look forward with perfect confidence to the undisturbed enjoyment of their holdings'.⁷⁵ It was understood that by allowing a cultivator to sink a well at his own cost, the proprietors had 'tacitly permitted him (cultivator) to get a title to the cultivation even against themselves'.⁷⁶ The landlord could not oust a cultivator who had obtained footing on another's land by sinking a well.⁷⁷ Indeed, if a cultivator was allowed to sink a well in the land he wished to bring under cultivation, with the passage of time he became a joint-proprietor of that land.⁷⁸ Similarly in Dera Ghazi Khan any cultivator who sank or repaired a well in the waste land or jungles acquired half share of the land.⁷⁹ In certain areas where wells were sunk or repaired even by 'strangers', they 'enjoyed the same footing as that of proprietors'.⁸⁰ All kinds of exceptions to the existing rules and usages were permitted where a cultivator had repaired or sunk a well.⁸¹ Those hereditary cultivators who had repaired or sunk a well invariably went beyond seeking occupancy rights; they sought *malkiyat* rights. After all in Prinsep's own settlement, 1253 occupancy tenants were raised to the status of proprietors. In Shahpur district it was observed that those who had sunk wells, often became proprietors of their holdings and the same was applicable to the *chakdars* from Multan.⁸² From this entire debate the right to sink wells emerges as one of the most significant rights for determining the cultivators' claims to their holdings. Given the importance of the right, the question arises as to why the

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 95-96, 107, 276, 569.

74. Dewan Dya Shankar's reply to question no. 2, *ibid.*, p. 316.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

76. Reply to question no. 2, *ibid.*, p. 317; see also p. 59.

77. Jhung District, *ibid.*, p. 59.

78. Gurgaon District, *ibid.*, p. 59.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

81. *Ibid.*, See for instance, exception no. 1, p. 133, no. 14, p. 133, no. 32, p. 136.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 334, 374.

right to sink wells was considered so significant. The answer has to be sought in the nature of the right itself.

The right to sink wells was a closely guarded right or privilege. The cultivators did not possess even the right to repair wells without the permission of the *malik*. Sinking wells was one of the privileges of the superior landholding class and the cultivators were debarred from that privilege.⁸³ It is repeatedly noted that as a rule the cultivators were never allowed to sink wells.⁸⁴ In a report of the Law Committee of the *Anjuman-i-Punjab*, it was noted that in certain adverse circumstances the owner of land could be driven to the necessity of securing tenants at any price including 'allowing them to exercise certain rights almost resembling proprietary rights over the land'.⁸⁵ The *Anjuman* unanimously objected to the use of 'almost resembling proprietary rights' and wished this phrase to be substituted by unambiguous statement that the tenants never acquired the right 'to sell trees or sink wells or transfer the land'.⁸⁶ It is apparent that the right to sink wells was a proprietary right. In one of the exceptions to the prevailing customs in common holdings, sinking of wells has been mentioned as exercise of one of the powers 'attending absolute ownership'.⁸⁷ Against this background the comment of a 'native' official explaining why cultivators did not have a right to sink wells is significant. He states that the reason for refusing the tenant the authority to sink well is that by having done so he becomes apparently a proprietor'.⁸⁸

Indeed, primary proprietary rights existed in water. In some areas it was noted that 'property consists essentially in water'.⁸⁹ That wells carried proprietary rights is apparent from varied information in the papers included in the *Tenant Right in the Punjab* from different parts of the Punjab. It is important to note that even fractional ownership rights were claimed. Thus, for instance, in a disputed occupancy right, the cultivator partly based his claims on his having restored an old well and the landlord rested his claim on the fact that one-fourth of the well was still held by him.⁹⁰ In places the land was divided within each well into shares called *lurees* (strings), and these *lurees* became the measure of right.⁹¹

Wells were private property and the right to sink wells was denied to the cultivators because through wells superior rights in land accrued. It has already been noted above that the cultivators who repaired or sunk wells invariably acquired some special rights over the land. In fact, they acquired

83. *Ibid.*, pp.94-95, 107, 276.

84. *Ibid.*, pp.66,95,107,548 (no.4).

85. *Ibid.*, p.569, no.5.

86. *Ibid.*, *Anjuman's* comments, no.5, p.569.

87. *Ibid.*, no.1, p.132.

88. *Ibid.*, Byj Nath's reply, p.96.

89. *Ibid.*, p.286.

90. *Ibid.*, *khuteonee* no.12, p.166.

91. *Ibid.*, p.164.

the status of *malik adna*, that is, subordinate/inferior proprietor in distinction to *malik ala*, that is, superior proprietors. That rights in land or its produce accrued as a consequence of sinking/repairing wells is also apparent from the fact that numerous *chackdars* in and about Multan who were given permission to sink or repair wells by Diwan Sawan Mal during Ranjit Singh's reign became part proprietors of the lands being served by those wells.⁹² Infact the term *chakdar* itself is derived from the well with the *chak* being the circular wooden frame on which the masonry cylinder of a well is built and *chackdar* is the owner of a *chak* or well.⁹³ The name expressed entitlement over land through sinking the well.⁹⁴ That rights in land accrued as a consequence of sinking or repairing wells is clearly manifest from the reaction and replies of the land-lords to the question 'supposing that formerly the tenant had no power of sinking wells, but now that it should appear advisable to give him that power, what conditions should be annexed?'⁹⁵ The land-lords reacted very sharply and they were 'utterly opposed to the tenants being empowered to sink a well'.⁹⁶ What is significant from our point of view is the fact that even after the landlords had acquired indefeasible proprietary rights in land through the revenue settlement by the British, they were apprehensive that by sinking wells tenants would acquire rights in land. They were not agreeable to tenants being given the right to sink wells 'unless he puts the proprietor's name on the title-brick or sign a written agreement with the proprietor to prevent the possibility of the latter ever losing his right of property'.⁹⁷ Even the 'native' officials were opposed to the tenants being given this right without specific conditions such as the tenant putting the land-lord's name on the title-brick⁹⁸ or else the tenants should not be held to be proprietors of such wells.⁹⁹

There is some evidence in the tenancy documents to suggest that superior rights in land through water were not confined to wells alone.¹⁰⁰ That water through other means could also create superior rights seem to be the underlying assumption of the fact that the British deemed it important to lay down a rule concerning conduct of water-courses through fields. It was stipulated that 'leave cannot be refused by a tenant, or to a tenant to conduct

92. *Ibid.*, p.374.

93. Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs: Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century*, Delhi, 1978, pp. 117-18.

94. *Loc.cit.* There is a lot of evidences to this effect in several other sources. However, since the author is confining herself to the tenancy documents, this evidence is not being adduced here.

95. *Tenant Right in the Punjab*, p. 81.

96. *Loc.cit.*

97. *Ibid.*, pp. 72,81,95.

98. *Ibid.*, p.96.

99. *Loc.cit.*

100. There is evidence on this issue in sources other than the tenancy documents. Since the Amritsar division was predominantly a well-irrigated area, most of the information on water rights is confined to wells.

a water-course through fields, but no property is thereby conveyed, it is but a servitude and must be paid for'.¹⁰¹ It may be kept in mind that analogous regulations concerning the use of *koora* were also carefully laid down in view of the existing social reality.¹⁰²

The minutely defined and apparently disparate constituents of the criterion for determining rights in land fall into place and begin to make sense when they are viewed as components of the social relations defining access to means of production with the aim of controlling release of productive forces. When the virgin land was brought under cultivation, two distinct categories of rights came into existence, those who organized labour and developed the land for settlement acquired superior rights and those who rendered labour acquired the right to cultivate some part of the cleared land. This right to cultivate, that is, *kasht* was inheritable and also saleable in some conditions but the superior land-holding class had the right to change their fields. Although the cultivator acquired inheritable right to cultivate, his right to improve his land and thereby to release further forces of production was extremely restricted through regulatory measures which determined his right to use *koora*, plant or cut trees and most importantly to repair or sink wells. These regulatory measures which carefully controlled cultivators' access to means of production rendered him totally dependent on the superior land holding class for continuous agricultural reproduction. Through control over his right to plant or cut trees, he was being denied freedom to replenish his basic tools and instruments of production such as ploughs and gears for wells. His exclusion from repairing and sinking wells put him in an extremely vulnerable position when stability in agriculture was in direct proportion to human intervention in water.¹⁰³ The non-agricultural sections, that is, the *sepi* and the *kamin* who were occasionally given plots of land for rendering service to the entire village or to specific families, did not have the right even to use their own *koora* for manuring their plots. They were in complete dependence on the land-holding sections of the village society.

In view of the fact that superior land-holding rights flowed from the right of bringing land under cultivation, it becomes imperative to know who had the right to bring land under cultivation and how that right was acquired. These questions were not directly part of the debate, but in so far as rights accrued as a consequence of bringing land under cultivation, there is indirect information on some facets of the issue. It goes without saying that dominant land-holding communities had enjoyed the right of bringing new land under

101. *Ibid.*, no. XIX, p.14.

102. *Ibid.*, no. VIII, p.13.

103. Tripta Wahi, 'Water Resources and Agricultural Landscape: Pre-Colonial Punjab', *Five Punjabi Centuries: Polity, Economy, Society and Culture, 1500-1900*, ed. Indu Banga, 1997, pp.267-284. See especially p.282.

cultivation. Prinsep's opinion that the tenants did not have the right to extend cultivation without the express permission of the land-lord¹⁰⁴ seems to be corroborated by the general lack of evidence of the cultivating communities bringing new land under cultivation on their own. However, the cultivators could bring large new tracts under cultivation at the initiative of the agents of the ruling power. The tenancy document contain numerous references which show that the *bootamar* brought large tracts of land on the banks of the rivers Chenab, Jhelum and the Indus under cultivation at the initiative of the *kardars*.¹⁰⁵

In the entire process of bringing land under cultivation and the subsequent organisation of agricultural activity on the broken land, caste and state power played a vital role. Firstly, only certain sections had the right to bring land under cultivation, secondly, bringing land under cultivation assumed not only financial resources but also the capacity of mobilizing labour. In this context the social mechanisms of control over people for mobilization as labour force assume significance; both caste and state power singly and/or in interaction undoubtedly played their role. In any event, caste played a crucial role in the organisation of agriculture following the initial clearing of land. The *sepi* and the *kamin* were untouchables and at the lowest rung of society, they were village servants who provided skilled (for tools and implements of agriculture) and menial services for sustaining agricultural production.¹⁰⁶

Through several causes at work under attenuating circumstances and forfeiture of rights by political upheavals, individual landlords would give to hereditary cultivators some of their proprietary rights concerning trees and wells. Slow and partial acquisition of some proprietary rights kept on changing the status of the *asamee*. As noted by the legal committee of the *Anjuman-i-Punjab*, with the passage of time the status of some of these cultivators would come to approximate the status of *malik*.¹⁰⁷ Invariably the status *malik adna*, that is, subordinate proprietor, was reached through the acquisition of rights in water.¹⁰⁸ While the *asamee* could acquire some rights over time, the *paheekasht* had no entitlement to any of these rights. His status as *paheekasht* was not liable to change and, therefore, it stands to reason that almost all maintained that only the position of the *paheekasht* was clearly definable.

It is apparent that there were multiple co-existing interests in the soil; they emanated from the initial clearance of the soil with two classes acquiring two distinct categories of rights. Those who had the right to bring

104. *Tenant Right in the Punjab: Selections*, p.619.

105. *Ibid.*, see, for instance, p.570.

106. *Ibid.*, see main usage number II concerning village servants '*Kumeen*', '*Sepi*', '*Choohra*' and '*kamo*', p.134.

107. *Ibid.*, p.570.

108. *Ibid.*, pp.59,61,260,569 (no.5), 276,286,570,573.

land under cultivation acquired superior rights while the cultivators acquired the inheritable right to cultivate. But this inheritable right to cultivation was conditional upon his complete and continuous subordination to the land-holder; that is repeatedly underlined in the tenancy documents.¹⁰⁹ The cultivator rendered various services and discharged certain obligations including *begar* and giving of fodder to the land-holder.¹¹⁰ The land-holder controlled the cultivators' capacity to renew his tools and implements of production through regulatory measures defining his access to timber. Most importantly, the exclusive rights of the land-holding community to repair and sink wells was the most potent instrument of control over the cultivators as also over the untouchables.

We may see all these factors at work under the Sikh rule. There is a strong impression that gets communicated through the pages of the *Tenant Right in the Punjab* that Maharaja Ranjit Singh's state obliterated all distinctions between the 'proprietors' and the cultivators. There are numerous references such as 'anarchy and irregular conditions of tenancy during the Sikh period',¹¹¹ 'every vestige of control....had fallen in disuse',¹¹² 'distinctions between proprietors and cultivators' had become 'extinct' during the Sikh rule,¹¹³ 'the Sikhs made no distinction between proprietors as a body and tenants',¹¹⁴ 'the Sikhs reduced all proprietors to one dead level without semblance of law',¹¹⁵ etc. etc. All this was repeatedly stated despite the fact that *malikana* continued to be paid during the Sikh period though probably at a much reduced rate;¹¹⁶ the land owners continued to enjoy fees and perquisites. After all the receipt of the *malikana* distinguished the superior land-holding class from the cultivators; it was indicative of the superior position of the land-holding class. If the Sikh state retained the *malikana* and even allowed the superior land holding class the privilege of excavating wells,¹¹⁷ what then underlay the general impression of all that distinctions between the two classes were obliterated by the Sikh rule. The answer seems to lie in the loosening by the Sikh state of the tightly controlled right over the release of forces of production.

For the Sikh state the value of each class was estimated at its cultivating power¹¹⁸ because maximization of revenue was the aim of the state optimization of land revenue was predicated upon quick release of productive forces. We have already suggested that the productive capacity of

109. *Ibid.*, pp.67,69,70,89,90,93,94, *passim*.

110. *Ibid.*, p.122, para 316.

111. *Ibid.*, p.182.

112. *Ibid.*, pp.7,182.

113. *Ibid.*, Rawalpindi, p.55.

114. *Ibid.*, p.281.

115. *Ibid.*, p.6.

116. *Ibid.*, pp.121,122,209,677-78.

117. *Ibid.*, p.274, fn.276.

118. *Ibid.*, p.180.

the cultivating class was very restricted owing to regulatory controls exercised by the superior land-holding class. We may recall that the *Anjuman-i-Punjab* identified proprietary rights with the right of improvement over land; tight control over water greatly impeded the cultivators' capacity to stabilize and improve his tillage. The Sikh state adopted the 'forced system of increasing cultivation'.¹¹⁹ Sobha Singh, Diwan Sawan Mal, General Avitable all expanded cultivation. In Gujranwalla district both Diwan Sawan Mal and General Avitable extended cultivation and improved productivity by bringing new land under cultivation and by restoring wells etc. in the already developed land. In this process, cultivators, such as *bootamar*, got to bring new land under cultivation on the banks of the rivers Jhelum, Chenab and the Indus. In Gujranwalla district both Diwan Sawan Mal and General Avitable extended protection to cultivators and Sawan Mal settled cultivators on the waste lands.¹²⁰ Sobha Singh and Sawan Mal got wastelands to be cleared and founded villages.¹²¹ Under these circumstances whosoever applied for permission to restore wells and reclaim land, readily got it;¹²² all kinds of people invested in the wells in and around Multan and other places too.¹²³ Those who invested in wells came to be known as *chackdar* in Multan and they became *malik adna*; *bootamar* on the river banks were often given *patta* by the *kardars* without consulting the 'proprietors'.¹²⁴ The *kardars* located cultivators in the settled villages too and wherever land was available for cultivation the Sikh state patronized them and repeatedly asserted that the state had the right over land and it could locate cultivators any and everywhere. It is not surprising that we find the *sepi* and the *kamin* too having land-holdings and seeking the status of occupancy tenants at the time of the first settlement under the British. It may be noted that the Sikh state engaged both with the land-holders and cultivators for payment of land revenue; whosoever could pay land revenue, increase productivity and expand cultivation, the Sikh state patronized them. In the process it made the right to release productive forces more easily accessible to larger sections of society than had hitherto been the case. To the extent that the rights which belonged to the superior land-holding communities and castes, were extended by the Sikh state to other and lower sections of society, the Sikh state reduced distinctions between the *malik* and the *asamee*. But in so far as the *malikana*, right to cut and plant trees, to repair and sink wells continued to be regarded as *malkiyat*

119. *Ibid.*, p.286.

120. *Ibid.*, pp.388-89.

121. *Ibid.*, p.570.

122. *Ibid.*, p.286.

123. *Ibid.*, p.274, fn.

124. *Ibid.*, p.326, fn.

rights¹²⁵ even if extended to newer sections, the Sikh state continued to retain older social relations of production.

125. It is important to keep in mind the fact that even when the Sikh state extended the right of sinking/repairing wells, it still acknowledged that the right belonged to the superior land-holding class. The newer sections had to pay 'manorial dues' to ex-proprietors of wells, *ibid.* p.274. fn.

THE BATTLE OF SABRAON (1846): RECONSIDERED

Mohit Mehra*

The Battle of Sabraon is the most important event in the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46). Its planning and execution remains a matter of military interest. Its results had far-reaching effects on the fate of the Lahore Durbar in general and the Punjab in particular. The present paper attempts to reflect upon the various stages of the Battle of Sabraon (1846).

The death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839 led to factionalism in the Lahore Durbar. Political murders one after the other caused uncertainty. Maharani Jind Kaur, the mother of Maharaja Dalip Singh managed the affairs with the help of her brother Jawahar Singh. Jawahar Singh's role in the murder of Prince Peshaura Singh, a son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, created a crisis. The army *panches* eliminated Jawahar Singh on 21st September, 1845. They began ruling in the name of Khalsa.¹ Lahore had become the centre of turbulence and disorder.² Moreover, Lord Auckland had anticipated "anarchy and disorder throughout the Punjab".³ At this juncture, Rani Jind Kaur decided to engage the Sikh army with the British forces. Her supporters acted in the manner detrimental to Khalsa.⁴

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had created a strong army. The Kingdom of Ranjit Singh appears to Shah Muhammad to have based on his military strength.⁵ In 1838, the regular army consisted of 36,242 : infantry 27,617, cavalry 4090 and artillery 4535.⁶ For G.L. Chopra, the Khalsa army numbered 75,000 men which was maintained at the cost of Rs.1.2 crore, thus consuming half of the total income of the Kingdom.⁷ However, J.S.Grewal considers the strength of the Khalsa army about 85,000 men in 1839 and 1,20,000 men in 1844 with total expenditure reaching up to six million

* Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (Punjab).

1. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, OUP, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 38-39.
2. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, Orient Longmans, New Delhi, 1967, pp.90-91.
3. B.J.Hasrat, *The Punjab Papers*, V.V. Research Institute, Hoshiarpur, 1970, p.38.
4. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, pp. 97-98; See also, B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations (1799-1849): A Reappraisal of the Rise and Fall of the Sikhs*. V.V.Research Institute, Hoshiarpur, 1968, p.261.
5. N.K.Sinha, *Ranjit Singh*, A.Mukherjee & Co. Calcutta, 1975, pp.157-58.
6. D.S.Johal, "Punjabi Heroic Poetry", *Pre-colonial and colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics and Culture: Essays for Indu Banga* (eds, Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall), Manohar, New Delhi, 2005, p.179.
7. G.L.Chopra, *The Punjab as a Sovereign State (1799-1839)*, V.V. Research Institute, Hoshiarpur, 1975, pp. 71-73 and 146; See also, Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, pp.9-10.

rupees in 1844.⁸ The strength of the Khalsa army had gone up to 1,50,630 men and expenditure about Rs.2.4 crore in 1845.⁹ On the other hand, the British could muster two lakh men for defensive and 36,000 for offensive purposes.¹⁰

On 11th December 1845, the Khalsa army, under the command of Raja Lal Singh and Tej Singh crossed the river Satluj at Harike.¹¹ By this time, the British troops had moved towards the river Satluj. Moreover, Lord Hardinge, the Governor General had reached Ludhiana.¹² On 13th December, Lord Hardinge declared the war. He confiscated and annexed the possessions of Maharaja Dalip Singh on the left bank of the Satluj to the British territories.¹³ The First Anglo-Sikh war had begun. On 18th December 1845, the British reached Mudki.¹⁴ A number of battles were fought: Battle of Mudki was fought on December 18, 1845. The British outnumbered the Sikhs. Moreover, graft and indecision marked its course adopted by irresolute commanders.¹⁵ The Battle of Ferozeshah was fought on 21st December 1845. The Sikh Sardars retreated treacherously. The British suffered heavily. Lord Henry Hardinge stated: "another such victory and we are done". It was first won and then lost by the Sikhs.¹⁶ The Battle of Buddowal was fought on 21st January 1846. The Sikhs under Sirdar Ranjodh Singh defeated the British, but did not follow this up.¹⁷ The British commander Harry Smith retreated hastily.¹⁸ The Battle of Aliwal was fought on 28th January 1846. General Harry Smith received reinforcements. He launched surprise attack on Ranjodh Singh who left the battle-field.¹⁹ Khushwant Singh considers it 'a mere skirmish magnified into a great battle', for covering the defeat at Buddowal.²⁰

Certainly, the loss of armour at Aliwal put the Lahore Durbar army on the defensive. Its generals were uncertain where the enemy would cross the river Satluj. So they separated their forces.²¹ The Battle of Aliwal took a

8. J.S.Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab: New Cambridge History of India*, II:3, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.23.

9. Fauja Singh Bajwa, *Military System of the Sikhs (1799-1849)*, Motilal Banarsi Dass, Delhi, 1964, pp.96-97.

10. B.J.Hasrat, *The Punjab Papers*, p.79.

11. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.46.

12. B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.263.

13. Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence Relating to Anglo-Sikh Wars*, Sikh History Society, Amritsar, 1955, pp.85-86.

14. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, p.105.

15. B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.268.

16. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, pp.111, 115; B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp.272-73.

17. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, p.111.

18. B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.277.

19. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.51; See also, B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.278.

20. Khushwant Singh, *How the Sikhs Lost Their Kingdom*, UBS. Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, p.118.

21. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, pp.51-52.

heavy toll of Punjabi armament. Onwards, the initiative passed out of their hands to the British.²² The British army was at Nahalke. At this time, the Khalsa army consisted of about 35,000 men. Trenches had been dug and parapets thrown.²³ The bulk of Khalsa army had been in the meantime assembled near Sabraon for the final trial of strength with the British. The latter was busy day and night on the erection of fortifications around its proposed site of a battle, was also adversely affected by the tragic results of Aliwal. Their spirits were damped. The weak-hearted among them left to their homes. Meanwhile, Gulab Singh Dogra put them in a state of suspense and uncertainty by dubious issuing orders of withdrawal from the left bank of the river Satluj.²⁴ Moreover, Lal Singh and Tej Singh, who could not be replaced for want of better leaders were thereby encouraged in their treacherous designs. Later on, Raja Gulab Singh was to receive the price of his treachery after the battle of Aliwal. The Governor General expressed his intention to make Gulab Singh independent of the Sikhs.²⁵ Sir Hugh Gough and Lord Henry Hardinge decided to make a frontal assault on Sabraon. Their main purpose was to destroy the Durbar army at one blow. They had the confidence that the important Sikh commanders were on their side.²⁶ As it happened, it rained heavily during February 7-9th, 1846. For the British, the river had risen due to heavy downpower.²⁷ On the evening of 9th February 1846, Lord Hugh Gough marched out of Ferozepur and under cover of darkness, surrounded the Punjabis at Sabraon.²⁸ On the morning of February 10, the Khalsa army found itself encircled between the two horse-shoes: facing them were the British and behind them the Satluj, now in full spate.²⁹ Meanwhile, Maj-General Harry Smith's Division rejoined Lord Hugh Gough's army. The British General took two days to prepare for the battle.³⁰ For two hours the hail of shots and shells continued on both sides and yet no advantage had been gained. By nine O'clock, it became clear that neither the Sikh guns could be silenced nor the Sikh troops.³¹ Hence, direct assault on the Sikh positions was finally ordered.³²

22. Khushwant Singh, *How the Sikhs Lost Their Kingdom*, p.118.

23. B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.279; See also, Jagmohan Mahajan, *Circumstances Leading to the Annexation of the Punjab*, Kitabstan, Allahabad, 1949, pp.30-31.

24. Fauja Singh, *After Ranjit Singh*, Master Publishers, New Delhi, 1982, p.93.

25. J.M.Walia, *Parties and Politics at the Sikh Court*, Master Publishers, New Delhi, 1982, p.281.

26. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.52.

27. Charles Gough, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, National Publishers, New Delhi, 1982, p.101; S.M.Latif, *History of the Punjab*, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, pp.545-47.

28. Khushwant Singh, *How the Sikhs Lost Their Kingdom*, p.122.

29. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.52.

30. B.J. Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.281.

31. Charles Gough, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p.101.

32. B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.281.

On the eve of the battle, Lal Singh sent to Lord Hugh Gough a full report on the position and the nature of entrenchments and the account and disposition of troops and guns through his confidential agent Shamsuddin.³³ The British Commander relied on the words of the 'Sabraon boy'.³⁴ The battle commenced on 10th February. Before dawn, a surprise was made on a post called Rode-Walla. The post which the British had allowed, from sheer negligence on the part of the superior officer to fall into the hands of the Sikhs just as they had allowed defense of Sabraon to become formidable without any efforts to retard or molest the Sikhs. They were waiting for guns and stores which had not yet been received.³⁵ After the possession of Rode-Walla, the battle began. It was an action exceedingly complicated and the generalship of both sides was regarded as equally defective. In fact, the British surprisingly found Rode-walla unoccupied. Throughout the First Anglo-Sikh War, the Sikhs tended to withdraw their picquets at night. They were in for a rude shock when day light came. There was a lack of strategy, concentrated authority and guidance on the part of the Sikhs and similar deficiencies also existed on the English side.³⁶

There were three lines of defenses, the front line on the left and centre being based upon a ditch and a bank about ten feet high, well revolted with wood. In addition to the ford, the position had been linked with the far bank of the river Satluj by bridge of boats. On the far side of the river, where the banks were much higher, the Sikhs had massed artillery to cover both flanks of their positions and check any attack upon them. The main part of the artillery was in the centre, where General Court and Mehtab Singh were in command. The left bank was in charge of Sham Singh Attariwala while the senior officer on the right appears to have been the Frenchman Mouton who commanded their irregular Cavalry. Tej Singh was on overall command of the army within the entrenchments. Lal Singh had the major part of the cavalry on the far bank. The defenses had actually been designed and laid out by the Spanish engineer officer Hyebra.³⁷ Hugh Gough decided to launch his attack on February 10th. His plan was to make his main effort against the Sikhs on the left and centre. The Sikhs moved off to take up their positions for the attack. The British deployed Smith's Division on the right, Gilbert in the centre and Dicks on the left to make the main attack. Within Smith's Division, Brigadier Penny had taken over the Godby's Brigade and Hick had assumed command of the Brigade, which originally had been Wheeler's. In Penny's Brigade, the Nasiri Battalion of Gurkhas had been brought in to replace one of Bengal Native Regiments, while Hick had only

33. Fauja Singh, *After Ranjit Singh*, p.94.

34. Khushwant Singh, *How the Sikhs Lost their Kingdom*, p.120.

35. B.S.Nijjar, *Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845-1849)*, pp.18-19.

36. Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars*, Thomson Press, Delhi, 1975, pp.87-88.

37. Khushwant Singh, *How the Sikhs Lost Their Kingdom*, pp.122-23.

two battalions, one of his native regiments having been left at Ludhiana.³⁸ The River had risen considerably during the night. The ford behind the Sikhs was virtually impassable. The British were deployed by first light but there was a thick mist over the battlefield. This delayed the activities. When the mist partly lifted, the Sikhs were astonished to see the British formed up ready to attack. The both sides opened fire. The bombardment continued for about two hours. The British guns appeared to have little effect on the Sikh defences.³⁹

Meanwhile, the infantry of the Sikhs' centre had launched a counter attack on Dick's Division. His men were hard put to it to hold on. Indeed some ground was lost and some of the guns captured by Stacey's men were retaken by the Sikhs realizing what was happening. Hugh Gough decided to convert his feint attacks against the Sikhs left and centre into real ones and ordered Smith and Gilbert to assault the defenses opposite them. As the pressure from Smith and Gilbert's Division increased, the Sikhs who had been drawn towards their right began to move back to their original positions. Dick's troops were able to press forward. The British cavalry now came into the picture. It was personally led by General Thackwell. A squadron of the 3rd Light Dragoons found a ramp over the Sikh entrenchments and crossing in a single file, formed up and charged the enemy.⁴⁰

Another squadron soon followed them. The Sikhs were now being pressed on all sides and although many of them were still fighting moving towards the bridge. Tej Singh had already left rather, he was the first to fly.⁴¹

Unfortunately for his army part of the floating bridge broke away and numbers of his men were drowned in the river trying to swim across or to make their way over the ford, which was too deep for normal use.⁴²

On the British left, the remnants of the Sikhs' Cavalry were being shepherded towards the bridge. Elsewhere, it was a matter of hand to hand fighting, with the bayonet as usual proving superior to the Sikh *tulwars*. Meanwhile, Sham Singh Attariwala organized a last stand around the bridgehead with the regular battalion, but gallantly as they fought they were overwhelmed. Sham Singh Attariwala covered himself with glory. On the morning of the battle, "the white bearded Sham Singh, dressed himself in white and having mounted his white horse addressed the men, calling them as true sons of the Khalsa. He was everywhere present urging to Sikhs to fight bravely. Sham Singh fell dead from his horse pierced with seven

38. Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars*, pp.87-88.

39. B.S.Nijjar, *Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845-1849)*, pp.20-21; See also, Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars*, pp.87-88.

40. Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars*, p.92.

41. Khushwant Singh, *How the Sikhs Lost Their Kingdom*, p.123.

42. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.53; See also, B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, p.282.

balls.⁴³ Shah Muhammad wrote of him as "squeezing blood out of the whites as one squeezes juice out of lemon."⁴⁴ Shah Mohammad extols the bravery of the Khalsa soldiers. He eulogizes the extraordinary valour of Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala.⁴⁵

The victory was complete for the British and 'crushing defeat' for the Sikhs. The Sikh losses were estimated at 10,000 men. They also lost all their 67 guns.⁴⁶ The British casualties were 320 killed and 2,036 wounded.⁴⁷ Hugh Gough's assessment of Sikh losses was 10,000 men and officers.⁴⁸ The whole Sikh army got utterly and irretrievably defeated.⁴⁹

The English also suffered heavily, many became ill after the battle from excessive fatigue and fever arising from their exertion under the cannonade. In the storm, their loss was heavy. Major General Sir R.Dick, a gallant Veteran of the Waterloo died of a wound received in the entrenchments. Major General Gilbert was lightly wounded and of the officers killed and wounded most suffered due to extraordinary courage they displayed.⁵⁰ McGregor writes about the battle of Sabraon "may be justly termed the "Waterloo" of India, it was the last, one of the hardest contested, like that great and ever memorable engagements, it completely broke the power of the foe."⁵¹ Lord Hugh Gough also described Sabraon as the 'Waterloo of India'. He paid rich tributes to the Sikh sardars and the army. He wrote "Few escaped: none, it may be said, surrendered. The Sikhs met their fate with the resignation which distinguishes their race". J.D.Cunningham rightly observes, "the soldiers did everything and their leaders nothing."⁵² Lord Hardinge opined, "the Sikh soldiers are the firmest men I have seen in Asia, bold and daring republicans."⁵³

The battle of Sabraon was a culmination of the First Anglo-Sikh War. The Sikhs fought bravely. The disaster to the Khalsa was complete and

43. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, p.116; For his biographical account see, Balraj Saggarr, *Who's Who in the History of Punjab (1800-1849)*, pp.358-58; S.M. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p.546.

44. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.53; Shah Mohammad writes thus:

ਸ਼ਾਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਰਦਾਰ ਅਟਾਰੀ ਵਾਲੇ, ਬੰਨ੍ਹ ਸਸਤੀ ਜੋੜ ਵਿਛੋੜ ਸੁੱਟੇ।

ਸ਼ਾਹ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਨੇ ਗੋਰਿਆਂ ਦੇ, ਵਾਂਗ ਨਿਝੂਆਂ ਲੂ ਨਿਚੋੜ ਸੁੱਟੇ।

Harminder Kaur, 'Contemporary Heroic Poetry on the Decline of the Lahore Kingdom,' Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, G.N.D.University, Amritsar, 1994.

45. D.S.Johal, "Punjabi Heroic Poetry", *Precolonial and Colonial Punjab*, p.179.

46. Hugh Gough, *The Sikh Wars*, p.93; Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.53; B.J.Hasrat, *The Punjab Papers*, p.102.

47. Sita Ram Kohli, *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, Vol.II, p.53; B.J.Hasrat, *The Punjab Papers*, p.102.

48. Hugh Cook, *The Sikh Wars*, pp.93, 223-24; Khushwant Singh, *How the Sikhs Lost their Kingdom*, p.124.

49. Charles Gough and A.D.Inner, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars*, p.128.

50. Ganda Singh, *Private Correspondence Relating to Anglo-Sikh Wars*, pp.97-100.

51. W.L.McGregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, James Madden, London, 1846, p.174.

52. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.II, p.53.

53. B.J.Hasrat, *Anglo-Sikh Relations*, pp.282-283.

overwhelming.⁵⁴ The victorious English army then crossed the river Satluj. They encamped at Kasur. The Governor General met Maharaja Dalip Singh and marched towards Lahore unobstructed. The Sikhs escorted the British army which reached Lahore on 20th February 1846 A.D. In the afternoon of the 20th February, Maharaja Dalip Singh, in charge of Frederick Currie, Chief Secretary and escorted by the British troops, was conducted to the palace at Lahore. On the 22nd February a brigade of British troops took formal possession of the fort of Lahore, the Badshahi Mosque and Hazuri Garden. The British force and presence had become conspicuous in Lahore in particular and in the Punjab in general.

54. Charles Gough and A.D. Inner, *The Sikh Wars*, pp.106-107.

GURU NANAK'S HISTORICAL SENSE

Nirbhai Singh*

Restoration of the historical sense is one of the singular contributions of Guru Nanak to the cultural history of medieval India. The Sikh doctrinal world-view is enshrined in *The Guru Granth*, which is the fountainhead for understanding the Sikh faith. The Sikh tradition in the history emanates from The Sikh Canon. It enjoins upon us to understand The Sikh Scripture in its proper perspective. The doctrines of The Sikh Scripture and the tradition should go hand in hand. Like Goethe's interpretation of the "living nature," *qudrat* in *The Guru Granth* is a historical world-picture of the *Akalpurakh*. In culture, history, and religion we are concerned with direction and destiny of man and the nature. History is a continuous progression from uncivilized society to the civilized social order. Guru Nanak envisaged the ideology of the social order (*sacha-khanda*) in the colophon of *The Japuji*. The Sikh religion was directed towards the destiny of the Khalsa creation. Passage from the *sacha-khanda* to the creation of the Khalsa-panth is a historical progression from the possible to the actual, unfolding the realm of actuality. Unfortunately, the present scenario of the Sikh ideology and the culture are cut off from the inner vision of the supreme truth. The triad of thought, saying, and deed (*mana*, *bachan*, and *karma*) are fragmented. The optimal synthesis of theory and practice is the central theme of the scripture. We do not find dichotomy in the preaching and doing in the Gurus. The Gurus represent quintessence of the doctrinal aspect of *The Guru Granth*. The gurus demythologized the mythical Indic and the Semitic ideologies, which were prevalent in the medieval ages.

The Sikh faith during the Gurus' period represents the 'Faustian spirit' of history. The Faustian spirit is detachment from the objects of the world. By such a treatment is meant that one distances oneself from the world and accepts that the "present" is the only significant for man. None of the personal hopes and fears and other inward impulses, which checkmate practical life, do not influence such detachment.

For the 'Faustian eye' everything is in motion and life means struggle. In the history of the culture, we are concerned with the actualization of the possible. It is the history of an inner spiritual becoming Being through the lifestyle of the world or region or the nation. Perhaps, for this reason the higher cultures are born in great crisis, upheaval, and turmoil.

* Senior Fellow, Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, HRoD, Government of India.

The Sikh history in the Guru period is full of turmoil. It gave birth to the voluntarist culture that was the motivating force for supreme sacrifice of the fifth and ninth Gurus. The euthanasiac spirit of dieing an honourable death is the message of *The Guru Granth*. It reaffirms the historical sense.

Guru Nanak was seized of secular or historical realities of his times. When Guru Nanak personally met Emperor Babur at Emnabad, he vehemently criticized his invasion on India in CS 1526 but he had not taken resort to sword by that time unlike the Sikhs in later period of history. His tongue was his sword, which could pierce into Babur's conscience. Furthermore, the dynamic metaphysical base necessitates the Sikh movement to develop it into an active resistance. For instance, Guru Nanak's long poetic anthology, "Babur-Bani" (GG, pp.417-18, 722-23) is a virulent condemnation of the Mughal Emperor Babur. His utterances, in the form of hymns, are a crusade against tyranny and injustice of the then Mughal Emperor. The word picture presented in the hymns is a portrayal of agony of the poor masses that were victims of the invaders' tyranny and injustice. It shows Guru Nanak's historical sense of duty for the amelioration of the subaltern. It advocates restoration of man's historical action, freedom and self-dignity in the coveted civil society. It sets aside medieval objectivity and absoluteness of truth and the feudal despotic authoritarianism. These are the kernel polemics confronted by the Sikh movement against the medieval philosophies and cruel practices prevalent in the land.

Prior to the birth of Sikh movement Punjabis were not martial. Mutual skirmishes and tribal remarries for wealth and honour of the women were the common features in the Punjab. The cultural concept of honorable death for the sake of noble cause was the innovation of the Gurus. This is possible only if one has a historical sense and is alive to the societal and historical responsibilities. The Punjabis were tolerating humiliation at the hands of the invaders. They were mostly menial workers and tillers on the land. Brahmins through rituals ruled over the peasantry. Moneylenders exploited them. Landowners dominated the scene of power. Feudal lords had the reigns of power in their hands. On the contrary, Rajputs and Marathas had the real sense of history. Guru Nanak infused the martial spirit into the marrows of the masses of India. The martial spirit came in the Sikh tradition from Guru Hargobind when he was adorned with two swords of *miri* and *piri*. The Sikh insurgence has the following elements:

The sages of antiquity in India and Greece had a real historical sense of time (*kairos*). In the early ancient history of India, they had a historical sense. We might have not recorded the chronology of the historical facts and the events, but we had the notion of logic of the ideas. The notion of the other world was not developed in ancient India. It was developed in the medieval ages. Our endeavour is to formulate a syntactical structure that helps discerning the real signification of the concept of history and time.

The logic weaves the ideas into the coherent logical configuration that mirrors the meaning. The interpreter culls the meaning. It also discerns order in the universe. For finding out comic order is postulated. The Sanskrit word *samsara* signifies point-instant universal flux and the regulative principle is *hukam* that owes its origin from Arabic.

The mythical events in the whirl of the *aeons* (*yugas*) and (Gk. *aeon*, age) are not recorded in minute details. These are the mythical conceptual spaces of dynamicity. The cardinal emphasis of the cyclic view of time in both India and Greece has been to transcend from the historical time and the mundane world. On the other hand, the prophetic or linear view of time emphasizes advancement towards the goal where time ends at a particular point. This is the basic difference between the Indian and the Greek is juxtaposed to the Semitic view of linear concept of time.

It is nothing but harnessing energy to action, which culminates in *niskama karma*. In *The Gita* the theoretical base of the Sankhya School is reconciled with the practical Yoga system. *The Gita* builds its argument on the mythical matrix of cyclic time (*kala*). On the other hand, the Gurus articulated their world-view based on the historical time that reflects Eternity. The Semitic linear time, the Indian, and the Greek cyclic views of time are blended with the affirmation of the reality of the world and the historical action.

When both are blended into one whole, self-transcendence and advancement can be possible. Guru Nanak tried to reconcile in both theory and praxis. This viewpoint advocates the dynamic view of life and world. Hence, the ideology, which is to represent such a view, is to be dynamic. The ideology is to be structured and restructured from time to time that is to be in conformity with the changed social conditions. This phenomenon developed the Sikh ideology moving from the *sacha-khanda* to the creation of the Khalsa-panth.

Alberuni, who came to India along with Mahmood Ghaznavi, wrote in his classical work *Al-Hind* that the Indians did not have the sense of history. They were living in the dreamy world of other worldliness. In the medieval ages people lacked genuine awareness of the historical time. The mythical one shadowed the historical time and, consequently, the phenomenal world was conceived as m'y¹ and a magic show. The medieval world-view, overall, was cut off from the stark social realities. It resulted in negation of the empirical life and the world. Sikhism reinterpreted the prevalent negative *Puranic* and The *Quranic* world-views of the middle age and revived the ancient Vedic affirmative historical world-view, which is primarily concerned with this world.

The basic question arises: can time end or can it have a beginning? Time itself is a postulate. In the Indian and Greek traditions, it is cyclic and in the Semitic or Syrian tradition, it is linear. These concepts are

presupposed only to explain human life in the world. Therefore, struggle in the world requires either cyclic or linear concept. The singular contribution of Guru Nanak lies in reconciling both the viewpoints within his philosophy. He propounds the concept of 'eternal present', which is without beginning, and end. It is ever living, growing and existentially experienced by progressing human consciousness. The vicious cycle of human life and death are endless phases of the flux of reality. In Sikhism, the reality of the historical events has been given central salience. Time is the very essence of the reality. There is no lease of life in the other world. The liberation from the mundane world is sought out. An endeavour is made to overcome death. Death has been treated as an event in life and a step forward is the renewal of existence and not an abrupt end of it. Human life is absorbed into the eternal life, as drop of water becomes one with the ocean.

For the crude materialist there is no return of the human life after the extinction of the body on the funeral pyre. The Semitic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), however, believe in the concept of the resurrection of the body for Judgement of the supreme Deity. In the Sikh tradition, the bodily death means to glide into the eternal life. In the existential lived experience, transcendence from death is to realize freedom from within. It is a stepping-stone for the voluntarist life 'here' and 'now'. While creating the khalsa Guru Gobind Singh blended the secular time with eternity (*maha kala*). It was a violent rupture from the current religious concepts of the time. It was the transformation of the mythical *satyayuga* into the real cyclic and the historical social reality. It means that commitment of the self to the present lies in facing courageously the existential responsibilities. The divine will that was executed by realizing the ideal space of the *Akalpurakh* on the earth.

This can be legitimately applied to the social phenomenon as well. The fact that the historical time was accepted as a reality, Sikhism recognizes oscillating seasonal rotation of twelve months of the year (*baran mahan*). It is the cyclic view that is reflected in man's sense of the realistic progress of the historical consciousness. It is in the real historical time that man is to negotiate his narrow vision of the *manmukh* to the cosmic vision of the *gurmukh*. His will becomes attuned to the cosmic will (*raza*). It implies that the cosmic will executes the divine purposes through man's will. Thus, all divinely ordained actions are carried out through man in the real historical time. The *gurmukh* is a free person who attains dual victory over the seamless and ceaseless flux of time and lives in Eternity. He is an epitome of theory and praxis because he carries out all actions in society.

It denies dimensions of the past ('was') and the future ('will be'). It expresses the concept of eternity. Thus, what is that concept? It denies creation, and destruction of the everlasting ontic essence. Eternity is the 'spacious present' ('eternal now'). The Parmenidean 'Being' lacks point-

instant changes. He upholds the timeless interpretation of eternity. Nevertheless, Sikhism's concept of eternity is closer to the Heracleitian and the Buddhist views of the universal flux. This change is not an "endless recurrence of the same". It is different and distinct at every moment. Guru Nanak ascertains this idea in one of his hymns. With reference to the *Kartapurakh*, he says:

My Master is new at every point-instant,

In addition, He is always benevolent.**

From this conception, the affirmation of historicity of man's social action follows. If man is a self-creative being, he perpetually creates and changes himself and the world around him. It is not necessary that it shall be a repetitive phenomenon. The Sikh philosophy explodes the Greek myth of the 'eternal return or recurrence'. We cannot catch up the transitory moments, which do not return to the same or identical recurrences. It cannot be stilled. The moment we try to still it, it slips away from us. The *Siddhas* and the *sannyasis* tried to arrest it, but failed. Hence, every moment is distinct and unique. The Gurus and the Bhaktas lived in the historical time and eternity. It implies that history does not repeat itself. The ideal man in Sikhism is required to swim with the tide of temporality.

The genius of Guru Nanak created the Sikh world-view. Other contributors to The Sikh Canon supplemented it with their hymns. Guru Nanak, the third Guru Amardass, and the fifth Guru Arjundev schematized it. The contents of *The Guru Granth* are eternal, but the Scripture itself is not uncreated. It assumed the status of eternity when Guru Gobind Singh raised the Scripture to the status of Divinity. Once it was created, it became eternal because of the eternal values, expounded in it. In the Sikh tradition, the scripture becomes eternal because it is true for all the times to come (i.e., *jugo juga atala*). It is not of an age, but of all ages. It presents the view that man has an inherent tendency of self-transcendence because of his creative nature.

In Sanskrit the term *samsara* has almost the identical meaning that explains the phenomenal transitory world. The literal connotation of the world *samsara* is that which is evanescent or changing. While accepting the transitory and evanescent nature of the world, the *homo sapiens* are projected as the concrete beings. Their bodies are the real micro-manifestation of the ontic macro-reality. They are destined to live *in* the world, but not *of* the world. They have an affirmative outlook or attitude towards the universe and the human life. This is the essence of the distinct and lived societal world of the Indian concept of *sannyasa* (renunciation). Guru Nanak and other contributors to The Sikh Canon tried to reinterpret it in their own regional dialects and different ways. The dynamic metaphysics

** *Sahib mera nita nava, sada sada dataru* (1-1)/ GG, p.660.

of Guru Nanak does not uphold withdrawal from the worldly duties. His composition :The Siddha Goshti: (GG, pp.938-46) reinterprets the prevalent static view of the phenomenal world-view.

Sikhism is critical of the gangrenous and corrupt medieval religious practices sanctioned by the above traditions. It bitterly condemns the rulers on the ground that they themselves subsumed or usurped all the temporal powers in their own persons. They became both *de facto* and *de jure* rulers. So much so, they concentrated all powers in their own hands. They claimed to be 'God incarnates', and relegated God to the peripheral status. This was the blatant exploitation of their worldly power. *The Dasam Granth* takes up his problem in the autobiographical poetic composition, "*Bachitra Natak*", which is a fictional creative work. The intention of the author is to expose false religious practices prevalent in the society. The anthology does not deal only with his life-events, but also depicts different incarnates (*avtaras*), both in the Hindu and the Buddhist traditions, who appeared on the canvas of history in the four mythical ages (*yugas*) from the *satyayuga* (pure truth) to the *kaliyuga* (dark age). The khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh treads on the canvas of history and leaves foot prints for the coming generations.

The Sikh philosophy is different in nature and tone. In the Sikh faith revelation is not the progressive self-disclosure of the *Akalpurakh* as is found in the Semitic traditions. The Sikh concept of revelation is the outcome of ecstasy (*sahaj*) and absorption in the *Akalpurakh*. Revelation of *The Guru Granth* is the ideological identity of monism inclusive of all possible possibilities of creation, but is subject to variations in attributes, which are hermeneutical coeval reactions of the contemporary contributors to *The Guru Granth*. We find that all the contributors to The Sikh Canon have identical ideology (monism), but attributes of the *Akalpurakh* have diversity of expressions in the context of their respective cultural milieus. Baba Farid's hymns out side The Sikh Canon have different tenor and are to be interpreted within the context of the Islamic tradition. When these hymns were incorporated in *The Guru Granth*, their meanings were transformed within the philosophical context of The Sikh Canon. That is to say, that the bigger footprint covers a smaller footprint. Similarly, the context of *The Guru Granth* is wider because it covers the Indian and the Semitic cultural contexts. It is not rejecting the other revelations, but to subsume them in the wider circle. Thus, *The Guru Granth* encompasses the Semitic revelation as well as *shruti* of the Vedic lore.

In India, the preference for the secular world in favour of the other world was displayed in the very early medieval period. Originally, even Islam was the religion of this world, but later it developed tendencies of the other world. Before Guru Nanak, asceticism was practised both in India and in the Islamic traditions in pursuit of salvation. The emphasis was laid on giving up one's home causing hardship to one's family. The ideal of the

other world was adopted in the extreme form of negation of one's own existence. Therefore, the concept of the other world was common in India and the Islamic countries. Guru Nanak bitterly condemned it in his hymns. The whole *The Guru Granth* is a critique of it. The Scripture advocates wrestling with the oddities of the world for the sake of the subaltern folks.

In the Semitic traditions - book, prophet, and revelation are central. Revelation is horizontal progression and is self-disclosure of reality in historic time. Reality in historic time is accepted because revelation as progression is accepted for approximation and narrowing down gap between the self and Numinous. Complete identity between the self and the personal Deity is not achieved.

Guru Nanak and other Gurus continue as centre until Guru Gobind Singh when *The Guru Granth* was elevated to the supreme Divinity. The Gurus' charismatic personality as central linch-pin is replaced by the *sabda-guru*. The Guru's charismatic personality disappears. *The Guru Granth* mirrors the *Akalpurakh*. On the contrary, in the Semitic traditions prophet's charismatic personality is not done away with. Revelation is progression in the linear time and historical realm. History of Sikhism is interpreted in the Semitic sense. In the Semitic religions personal God is central and in the Indic tradition of *Advaita* monism is the ideology and in Buddhism emancipation from suffering is central. *The Guru Granth* represent restructured Indic ideology (non-dualism/monism=*Advaita* is Indic).

When we say that *The Guru Granth* is an epiphany of the 'guru' means that the scripture alone is a living contemporary sacred scripture (*pragat guran ki deha*). *The Guru Granth* is a living God on the earth.

In Islam, the revelation (*wahy*) is consummation of revelation in *The Quran*. It descends through Gabriel (Zabriel) in intervals to Prophet Muhammad. It is a claim of *The Quran* that earlier revelations were partial that are subsumed in the *Quranic* revelation. It is the perfect revelation. Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet and there can be a *murshad* or a *pir* or an *aulia*. Guru Nanak is regarded the *pir* among the Muslims and not *nabi* or *rasul*. Finality of the Book (*The Quran*) and the lineage of the prophets from Adam culminate in the Prophet Muhammad. *The Guru Granth* is a scripture of different nature and note. In *The Guru Granth* no hymn (*ait/kalam*) is incorporated while the entire *Quran* is attributed to Prophet Muhammad. In *The Guru Granth* revelation is not progressive self-disclosure of the Being as is found in the Semitic traditions. The Sikh concept of revelation is the outcome of ecstasy and absorption in the *Akalpurakh*. The revealed hymns of the contributors to The Sikh Canon cover the period from the sixth to seventeen century Christian era. Revelation of *The Guru Granth* is the ideological identity of monism inclusive of all possible possibilities of creation but it is subject to variations in attributes, which are hermeneutical coeval reactions of the

contemporary contributors to *The Guru Granth*. Their utterances could not be accepted as such because Guru Nanak was the first Guru who collected hymns of other *bhaktas* and Sufi saints. We find that all the contributors of the Canon have identical ideology (monism) but attributes have diversity of expressions in the context of their cultural milieus. Baba Farid's hymns have different tenor and are to be interpreted within the context of Islamic tradition. When these hymns are incorporated in *The Guru Granth*, then their meanings are changed. That is to say, that the bigger footprint covers a smaller footprint. Similarly, Context of *The Guru Granth* is wider because it covers Indian and the Semitic cultural contexts. It is not rejecting other revelations but to subsume them in the wider circle.

On the other hand, in the Indic traditions revelation is not presented in historical time because time in Indian thought is illusory. It is only in the Indian traditions that historical time as reality is accepted which has been reconciled with the cyclic time of Indian and the Greek traditions. It is interesting to note that revelation in *The Guru Granth* is not progressive as is in the Semitic traditions. The ideology of *The Guru Granth* is kernel, but interpretations differ. Revelation is self-disclosure of the Numinous through multiplicity of expressions. The revelation in *The Guru Granth* has ideological identity of monism but the contributors to the Scripture picture contemporaneous social realities that were in fluid forms. They were critical of the morbid social and political conditions in the society. The medieval Indian culture was in turmoil. The social and religious institutions were static and had lost contact with existential realities. The feudal structure of the Turco-Afghan and Mongol was in conflict with Indian feudal monarchic systems.

The Guru Granth is a critique of the medieval social orders in theory and vogue. Indian revelation is not progressive and fragmented ecstasies. It is an outcome of esoteric discipline of the *risis*, *bhaktas* and gurus. Therefore, *The Guru Granth* is a treasure-trove of coeval ecstasies of the *bhaktas* and the *sufis* who had identical monistic ideologies. Their ideologies were encompassed within the concrete ideology of *The Guru Granth*.

It is interesting to note that the *Bhaktas* and the Gurus tried to synthesize the processes of spiritualization and secularization or sacred and the profane. The efforts of the gurus were to spiritualize the temporal. For example, *seva*, *langar*, *sangat*, *khanda-baptism*, *Akal takht*, etc., are spiritualized in Sikhism. The Gurus constructed their edifice ideology on the anchor of historical time. They inspired the Indians to imbibe historical sense. It prepared them to rebut atrocities of the alien invaders on India.

THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB AND SIKHS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: SOME PERCEPTIONS BY RATTAN SINGH BHANGU

Jaspal Kaur*

For the Sikhs the eighteenth century is a period of crucial importance for more reasons than one. One significant development in the evolution of the Sikh faith during this period was that Guru Gobind Singh ended the personal Guruship and passed the succession to the *Guru Granth Sahib* in perpetuity. Henceforth, none in the human form after the Ten Gurus was to be acknowledged by the Sikhs as Guru. That the *Guru Granth* is Guru Eternal has been the conviction of the Sikhs since 1708. Since then it has shaped the Sikh concept of life in the religious, political, social and cultural spheres.

This paper seeks to examine the significance of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the Sikh way of life in the eighteenth century. How it came to be regarded as the basis of Sikh practise as well as of Sikh devotion and more significantly how it came to be regarded as the supreme authority and ultimate guide for the spiritual and moral path as laid down by the Gurus, are some of the questions to which answers are sought in this paper. Undoubtedly its role in determining the course of the history of the Sikhs has been crucial.¹ In brief, the perceptions about the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the minds of eighteenth century Sikhs are sought to be examined, in the light of the evidence provided by Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Sri Guru Panth Prakash* (1841). This becomes all the more pertinent when we consider that it was only after 1708 A.D. i.e. the passing of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs were called upon to accept a scripture as their Guru instead of any human form.

No doubt, the ideas of Sikh sovereignty and the evolution of the Sikh panth are all important to Rattan Singh Bhangu, but a critical examination of the evidence provided by him also helps us to analyse in what manner the *Guru Granth Sahib* was perceived by the Sikhs in their period of struggle against the Mughals and Afghans.

Rattan Singh Bhangu is very clear on one point viz. the end of personal Guruship after Guru Gobind Singh. Hence, one reason cited by him, though controversial, for the rejection of Banda Bahadur by the Tatt

* Reader and Head, History Department, Punjabi University, Patiala.

1. Harbans Singh, 'The Guru Granth Sahib: Guru Eternal for the Sikhs' in *Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition*, (editor) Gurdev Singh (Patiala 1986), p.220.

Khalsa was that he had declared himself as the Guru.² Similarly the claims of Sodhi Gulab Rai,³ Kharak Singh Gangushahi⁴ and Harbhagat Niranjania⁵ for Guruship were not accepted by the Sikhs. Thus, the *Guru Granth Sahib* had come to be recognised as the only True and Supreme Guru by the Sikhs of the eighteenth century. No wonder, the claims to Guruship by others stood rejected.

There are quite a large number of references in the *Panth Prakash* to show that the *Guru Granth Sahib* in which was enshrined the Gurbani had come to play a special role in the lives of the eighteenth century Sikhs. It is noteworthy to mention here that in times of emergency or crisis, the Sikhs sought guidance from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. When the Sikhs were offered a jagir by the then Mughal subedar of Punjab viz. Zakariya Khan, they were not very keen in accepting the proposal. However a relevant *Vak* from the *Guru Granth Sahib* being read by the Akal Takht Jathedar motivated them to do so. In the *Vak* as stated by Bhangu, it was underlined that

ਟਹਲ ਮਹਲ ਤਾਕਉ ਮਿਲੈ ਜਾ ਕਉ ਸਾਧ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲ⁶

which means by doing *seva* one achieved status. Precisely at that tune Kapur Singh was fanning the sangat. He was thus asked by the Panth to accept the Mughal offer of jagir and nawabi, which he then did so. Thus it is evident that the Panth got directions from the *Guru Granth Sahib* which was recognised as the supreme authority.

It is stated that, "in their hard exilic days soon afterwards when they were outlawed and had to seek the safety of the hills and jungles, the Sikhs' most precious possession which they cherished and defended at the cost of their lives was the *Guru Granth*."⁷ Bhangu informs us that during the tune of *wadda ghallughara* (1762) both the Amritsari and Damdami Bir were present amongst the Sikhs. Thus carrying the *Guru Granth Sahib* with them whenever they moved, was perhaps a common practise of the Sikhs of the eighteenth century.⁸

2. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Prakash*, (ed.) Balwant Singh Dhillon (Amritsar 2004), p.130.

3. *Ibid.*, p.166.

4. *Ibid.*, p.174.

5. *Ibid.*, p.181.

6. *Ibid.*, p.207.

7. Harbans Singh, *op.cit.*, p.223.

8. J.S.Grewal, *Sikh Ideology, Polity and Social Order* (New Delhi, 1996). This tradition of carrying the *Guru Granth Sahib* with them when the Sikhs went to battle continued well into the 19th and 20th centuries. Harnam Singh Shaan in one of his articles on *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* states that a note appears at the end of a beautifully written manuscript of this Holy Book present till today in the British Museum and Library, London under its No.Cr 1125. It was captured by Mr.H.Erskline from the camp of Raja Sher Singh on 21st Feb.1849 in the battle of Gujarat in which Rajas Chattar Singh and Sher Singh were finally defeated during the Second Anglo-Sikh War, on the eve of the fall of Sikh Kingdom and annexation of Punjab by the Britishers on 29th March 1849.

Repeatedly in the *Panth Prakash* Bhangu impresses upon his readers, that if the Guru and the four sahibzadas could sacrifice their lives for the security and well being of the Panth, then why not the Sikhs themselves. He also does not fail to mention that the supreme source of inspiration of the Sikh martyrs was none other than the *Guru Granth Sahib* and *gurbani*. As the Sikh tradition goes, one reason for the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh was that he had re-arranged the *Guru Granth* (as finally shaped by Guru Gobind Singh), and hence the Sikh Sangat had pronounced a curse on him that his body could be cut into pieces. Following the tradition, Bhangu accepts this as a valid reason. If we historically analyse the position and personality of Bhai Mani Singh vis-a-vis the policy of the Mughal government, it is clear that at this time Bhai Mani Singh was a highly respected leader in the Sikh community and was a source of its inspiration and guidance. And when the Mughal government desired to reverse its policy of rapprochement towards the Sikhs, what better way of announcement of this change could be than the execution of this great leader of the Sikhs at this time.

For martyrs like Bhai Mani Singh *gurbani* enshrined in the *Guru Granth Sahib* was the main source of that strength and motivation. Bhangu tells us that while his body was being cut into pieces, Bhai Mani Singh was doing '*Sukhmani Path*' and he quotes one line from the same:

ਨਹਿ ਕਿਛ ਜਨਮੈ ਨਹਿ ਕਿਛ ਮਰੈ

This gave him the strength to become a 'Bideh' (ਬਿਦੇਹ - to separate soul from body) and thus he bore all tortures and suffering without a pinch of pain or agony,

ਨਹਿ ਦਫ਼ ਪੀੜ ਦੇਹ ਉਨ ਜਾਨੀ

ਬਿਦੇਹ ਰੂਪ ਥੋਂ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਧਾਰਯੋ¹⁰

Bhangu also quotes a slok from Kabir in appreciation of Bhai Mani Singh's martyrdom

‘ਕਬੀਰ ਜਿਸ ਮਰਨੇ ਤੇ ਜਗ ਡਰੈ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਆਨੰਦ

ਮਰਨੇ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ ਪੂਰਨ ਪਰਮਾਨੰਦ’¹¹

When Ahmed Shah Abdali led his seventh invasion into India in Oct. 1764, in Amritsar, he was surprised to find only thirty Sikhs in number fearlessly guarding the Harmandir Sahib under the command of one

(Continued from page 34)

"After the infantry charging the enemy at Goojerat the Cavalry and Light Artillery pursued the fugitive Sikhs and Afghans. The infantry then advanced steadily in line until clear of the balzing camp, when they filled arms. It was there that I found this book in Tent of one of the hostile chiefs - probably Sher Singh's. This is called the *Granth* or Code of Sikh religion. It is highly prized by the Sikhs and I have had many solicitations for it from Sikh gentlemen." (Lahore, 1849 April).

9. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *op.cit.*, p.219.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.* In the *Guru Granth Sahib* this slok is on p.1365.

Gurbakhsh Singh Nihang in a readiness spirit of self-sacrifice. Bhangu gives a graphic description of how the thirty men fell fighting against the Afghans and achieved martyrdom in the true spirit of Sikhism.¹² For Gurbakhsh Singh, achieving martyrdom was like getting married with death. So Bhangu makes him prepare for martyrdom as a bridegroom prepares for marriage and throughout the process of preparations *bani* from *Guru Granth Sahib* was being recited, ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਪੜ੍ਹੀ।¹³

When all preparations were complete Gurbakhsh Singh Nihang alongwith his companions offered prayers in the Harmandir Sahib to preserve their *Sikhi* with *Kesh* on their heads. Just as Hindus worshipped Ganesh when they were to start an auspicious occasion, the Sikhs of the eighteenth century bowed their heads before the *Guru Granth Sahib* in deep reverence and offered *ardaas*. When Bhangu compares the preparations of Gurbakhsh Singh Nihang for achieving martyrdom vis-a-vis the preparations of a bridegroom, he does not fail to mention that *rababi kirtan* was going on in the Harmandir Sahib and the *bani* of *Ghorian* (ਘੋੜੀਆਂ) was being recited.¹⁴ The faith of the eighteenth century Sikhs to rever the *Guru Granth Sahib* before embarking upon any auspicious occasion is thus evident.

It is noteworthy to mention here that Bhangu's account on the Sikh attack on Kasur in April 1763 brings out the manner in which directions and guidance were sought from the *Guru Granth Sahib* whenever there was some hesitancy or doubt because it had come to be regarded as the supreme perpetual authority of the Sikhs both spiritually as well as historically. When one Brahmin in distress approached the Sikhs at Harmandir Sahib for help against the Afghans of Kasur who had carried away his wife, the Sikhs were a little hesitant because the Afghan army was greater in numerical strength¹⁵ and its artillery and fortifications were presumed to be invincible. Not only this, both the Marathas and the Afghans under Abdali had been unsuccessful

12. *Ibid.*, pp.390-394. Also compare the account as given in Qazi Nur Muhammed's *Jangnama* compiled in 1765. It is a versified history of a military campaign during which Abdali had to mainly face the Sikh misls of the Punjab. Despite Qazi Nur Muhammed's extreme hostility towards the Sikhs his narrative corroborates the picture of the heroic fight put up by them as is given in Sikh traditions. For example, Nur Muhammed corroborates the story of thirty Sikhs willingly sacrificing their lives in defence of Darbar Sahib by challenging a 30,000 strong Afghan cavalry outside the gate of the shrine. "When the Shah arrived at the Chak, he did not find any one of those infidels there. But a few men had stayed back within the internal enclosure so that they might spill their own blood and sacrifice their lives for the Guru. as they saw the Shah and the entire army of Islam, all of them came out of the enclosure. Those Sikhs were thirty in number, they did not at all show any fear of being killed nor the dread of death." For ref. see J.S.Grewal and Irfan Habib (edited), *Sikh History from Persian Sources* (New Delhi, 2001), pp.204, 207.

13. *Ibid.*, p.388.

14. *Ibid.*, p.389.

15. *Ibid.*, p.361. Bhangu gives an exaggerated number of the Afghan army as twelve lakhs.

against them. For the Sikhs, it was a perplexing situation. Once the Brahmin had approached them and sought their help, it was a matter of prestige for the Sikhs as they would be failing in that duty of *parswarth*¹⁶ if they did not help the needy Brahmin. On the other hand, the greater military strength of the Afghans made them hesitant, so it was decided by the Sarbat Khalsa gathered at Harmandir Sahib to take *Vak* from the *Guru Granth Sahib* because

‘ਤੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਚੀ ਹੈ ਦੇਹਿ’

and

‘ਤੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਹਮ ਹੈ ਸਿੱਖ ਤੋਈ’

The *Guru Granth Sahib* is referred by Bhangu as the true living embodiment of the Gurus. The *Vak* taken read as follows :

ਪੰਜੇ ਬਧ ਮਹਾਬਦੀ ਕਰਿ ਸੱਚਾ ਢੋਆ¹⁷

The meaning of the *Vak* was interpreted in terms of victory for the Khalsa. Within no time, all hesitancy and confusion was gone, everyone was happy and jubilant and the forthcoming victory of the Khalsa was announced by the beating of drums. Such was the confidence and trust reposed in the *Guru Granth Sahib* by the Sikhs of the eighteenth century. All the forces which the Sikhs could muster at that time numbered 24,000 while the Afghans were supposed to be twelve lakhs in number. But once the *vak* from the *Guru Granth Sahib* had been recited, there was no looking back. The *Vak* in the form of a *Hukam*, a divine order or command or pronouncement had gained acceptability and recognition.

On hearing from one Sikh who had come from Kasur that the fasting of Ramzan was going on, the Sikhs thought that this could be the most opportune moment to attack Kasur because the Afghans would not be that energetic and full of vigour. In fact, Bhangu points out that it was the belief of the Sikhs that the *Guru Granth Sahib* had created such an opportunity to facilitate victory for the Sikhs.

ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਅਬ ਬਿਧੀ ਬਨਈ

ਰਖ ਰੋਜੇ ਵਹਿ ਨਿਰਬਲ ਭਏ¹⁸

Harbans Singh states that the *Guru Granth Sahib* ‘moulded the Sikh concept of life. From it, the community’s ideals, institutions and rituals derived their meaning.’¹⁹ One such institution to which Bhangu makes frequent references and which played a crucial role in the history of the Sikhs during this period was the *Gurmata*. It was a resolution, generally passed in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* on different issues concerning the Sikh panth, after a lot of deliberations by the Sikhs present. The passing of the *Gurmata* in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* by the Sarbat Khalsa gave it a special religious sanction and significance. Many of

16. *Ibid.*, p.362.

17. *Ibid.*, p.362. In the *Guru Granth Sahib* this verse is on p.1193.

18. *Ibid.*, p.363.

19. Harbans Singh, *op.cit.*, p.224.

the important *gurmata*s were passed when the Sikhs gathered at Amritsar on the occasion of Baisakhi and Diwali, but not always. Bhangu makes frequent references to *gurmata*s which emerged as a significant institution in the eighteenth century as a response to the trials and tribulations being faced by the Sikhs during this period of struggle against the Mughals and Afghans.²⁰

Thus from the evidence provided by Bhangu it is clear that it had come to be accepted by the Sikhs of the eighteenth century that the divine spirit which had inhabited the bodies of the ten Gurus dwelt now in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Personal guruship had come to an end and the whole Sikh community, in its organised form called the Panth was to guide itself by the teachings of the Gurus as incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The claims of other pretenders to Guruship were thus rejected by the Sikhs.

The *Guru Granth Sahib* was a source of inspiration and guidance for the Sikhs during this important phase of their history. In case of any hesitancy, confusion or doubt directions were sought from the *Guru Granth Sahib* by reading a *vak* from it. The Sikh martyrs of the eighteenth century bravely and courageously bore all sufferings and torture and did not fear death largely because of the inner moral strength which they derived from gurbani as enshrined in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Bhangu often gives references of bani of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Further, as pointed out by Bhangu, no *muhurat* or any ritual was required before the Sikhs embarked upon any battle or any important event. Reading a *vak* from the *Guru Granth Sahib* with bowed heads and folded hands was suffice as the Sikhs reposed abiding faith and trust in the holy scripture. Thus from the above it is clear that *Guru Granth Sahib* remained relevant not only for the religious life of eighteenth century Sikhs but also their social and political life.

20. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *op. cit.*, pp.215,258,299,308,360,363,372,377,387,399.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SIKH POLITICS IN DAVID PETRIE'S VIEW, ESPECIALLY IN 1911

Nazer Singh*

David Petrie was Assistant Director of Criminal Intelligence in the Department of Punjab Police. His superior in the Department was C.R. Cleveland. Whereas Petrie compiled in August 1911 what had been called 'Memorandum' on Developments in Sikh Politics,¹ Cleveland got published in 1917, *The Punjab Ghadar Directory*. While forwarding Petrie's work C.R. Cleveland had recorded on October 16, 1911 :²

The Sikhs are, for many reasons, of special interest to everybody engaged in maintaining British rule in India. Their modern developments are specially difficult to understand and apprise aright..... The exact point at which the Sikhs require guidance, stimulation or restraint from government in their effort to improve themselves calls not only for statesmanship but for information and knowledge.

The Ghadar Directory of 1917 was prepared in 1915. Petrie was one of the five Punjab police men injured at the Budge Budge ghat on September 29, 1914, when an armed clash took place between the passengers of the Kamagata Maru ship and the British forces.³ In 1911 he was aware of Sikh participation in the anti-British activities in England, America and Canada,⁴ and he had reported that revolutionary writings from abroad had been reaching to the Khalsa College Amritsar as well as to the Punjab/Sikh newspapers.

Petrie's association with the Punjab and Sikh politics went beyond the early phase of Gadar movement (1913-15). The Nankana tragedy in February 1921, brought him again on the political scene.⁵ In March he was ordered to leave Calcutta for Lahore to help the Punjab authorities in

*Reader, Department of Correspondence Courses, Punjabi University, Patiala.

1. Sohan Singh Josh (1970, 1977) in his Punjabi book on the history of Akali Morchas called it as 'Memorandum : The Politics of Sikh Community. Singh Sabhas and the Chief Khalsa Diwan - 1911 by D. Petrie'. *The Panjab Past and Present*, published Petrie in its October, 1970, issue but did not refer to C.R. Cleveland. The journal entitled it as 'Recent Developments in Sikh Politics'.
2. Quoted in, M.L. Ahluwalia, *Gurdwara Reform Movement 1919-1925: An Era of Congress-Akali Collaboration* (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 01, 452.
3. James Campbell, *Political Trouble in India 1907-1917* (rpt.), (Calcutta, 1973), p. 222.
4. See, *The Panjab Past and Present*, Oct, 1970, pp. 317, 333.
5. This paragraph is based upon Sohan Singh Josh, *Akali Morchian Da Itihas* (1977), pp. 86-87.

handling the Nankana case in such a manner that the Commissioner of Lahore, C.M. King, and other officials could be exonerated from the Sikh charge that they were responsible for the massacre at Nankana. He was expected to pacify the Sikhs. Petrie was hesitant to accept this job and he told the Government that it would not be possible for him to (mis) guide the Sikhs because every 'neo-Sikh' leader was aware of his role in foiling every Sikh conspiracy against the British—whether the conspiracy was made in India or the outside—till date. The Sikhs knew him for his role during the Gadar, and they would never believe in 'my impartiality', wrote Petrie. Yet he accepted the new assignment and choose to work secretly under C. Kaye, Director, Intelligence Bureau. He was to work in Simla.

D. Petrie's new appointment made his 'Memorandum' of 1911 once again a significant policy document. C.M. King, the Punjab Chief Secretary, in his letter, dated March 26, 1921, drew the attention of India's Home Department to the relevance of some paras of Petrie's account to deal with the Akali movement.⁶ The paras dealt with the 'religious differences among the Sikhs', and Petrie's exposition of these differences in 1911 was considered as correct and sound by the then Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, wrote C.M. King. Interestingly, King offered his own interpretation of the Sikh religious differences by writing that the Sikhs were divided into two parties. "The two parties are the *sanatanist* or old Sikh party, and the new or reforming party."⁷ By the *sanatanists* he meant the Mahants.

As an Intelligence official Petrie continued to write on, and deal with, the anti-British movements in Punjab and elsewhere. His account of communist activities in Bengal was published on the eve of the famous Meerut conspiracy case. It was entitled, *Communism in India 1924-1927*. In this work, Petrie took Gadar as 'a continuing revolutionary conspiracy recruited largely from Sikhs'.⁸ He wrote that the movement was suppressed during the war (1914-18) "but has never been stamped-out, and there are still in the Punjab many returned Sikhs whose bitter hatred of our rule predisposes them to join with eagerness in any conspiracy aimed at the subversion of our authority."⁹

In February 1926 came out a pro-communist Punjab monthly, *Kirti*, Published from Amritsar, it was edited by Santokh Singh. He along with Rattan Singh had participated in the fourth Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in November 1922. They had met there both M.N. Roy and Zinoviev, the Secretary-General of the Comintern. Santokh Singh had started *Kirti* as the first step towards the formation of Kirti-Kisan Party. Already, he had attended the Kanpur Communist Conference in

6. See, M.L. Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*, p.2.

7. Quoted in M.L. Ahluwalia, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

8. Quoted in A.K. Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *India and Communism* (National Book Agency : Calcutta, 1997), p. 214.

9. *Ibid.*

December 1925. On the birth of *Kirti*, Sir David Petrie remarked : '..... the establishment of the Sikh Communist paper showed that Moscow's efforts to sow the seeds of the Bolshevism among the disaffected Sikhs in India had not altogether been unsuccessful.'¹⁰

By way of conclusion Petrie's *Communism in India* linked Gadar movement with the Moscow centred Communist International. As such, it was an agency for communist movement in the Punjab. Simultaneously, Petrie saw the revival of Gadar in America and Canada by 1926 and noticed that the revival was accompanied there 'by the growing cult of Babbar Akalis'. He reported that 'the attention of the Gadar Party seems for the moment to have been distracted towards events in China'.¹¹ Implicit in Petrie's argument was that the Gadar was an international Sikh movement by its own standing also. He reported that Teja Singh Sutantar was not permitted to complete his military training by the Turkish Govt. and had left for America.

Home Department of Government of India produced in 1933 a book entitled, *India and Communism*. It was revised and updated in January 1935. The book dealt with the Indian Communist Movement from 1927 to early 1935. The book had a separate chapter on the Sikh political activities. The chapter was entitled 'Sikh Militancy'. The chapter began where Petrie had left in 1927. Gadar was glorified by saying that 'the Punjab branch of the Gadar Party had been renamed the Kirti Kisan Party'.¹² It was the discription of Teja Singh Sutantar's activity out-side India that dominated the narrative of 'Sikh Militancy'. The chapter under consideration proclaimed that efforts of Sohan Singh Josh and Bhag Singh Canadian in Punjab to organize Kirti-Kisan movement in 1928 proved 'ephemeral'. Going by this chapter, the glorification of Gadar was the glorification of Teja Singh Sutantar, and it was at the cost of communists like Josh and the Canadian (Bhag Singh). Obviously, the Sikh Militancy had acquired a political role by 1935. The role was interesting to the British.

The chapter 'Sikh Militancy' upheld Petrie's method of looking at the anti-British movements among the Sikhs from the three ends. The ends were (1) the San Francisco side, (2) the Moscow end, and (3) the Indian end. This prismatic-approach denied originality to every movement, it mixed the movements and obscured the role of the individuals. The movements and their leaders were glorified and vilified simultaneously.

David Petrie's 'Memorandum on Sikh Politics (1911)' was a lengthy political comment upon Sikh history since Guru Nanak. One can find a number of errors in his treatment of the Guru period. In fact, his editor

10. Sohan Singh Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party*, Vol. II, p. 228.

11. Quoted in, A.K. Mukhopadhyay, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 218.

12. See, A.K. Mukhopadhyay, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 223.

Ganda Singh had already corrected him on this account.¹³ However, the editor did not bother to look critically at Petrie's presentation of the Sikh past after 1708 A.D. Ganda Singh also missed the political import of a few observations of Petrie about Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa. Without noticing these observations one may fail to see correctly his treatment of the Singh Sabha and Chief Khalsa Diwan movements as well. Because Khalsa and the Tatt Khalsa were the central theme with Petrie. The changing nature of Tatt Khalsa since its emergence in the post-Banda Singh period as well as its role as the chief vehicle of Sikh power was his main concern. Petrie had assumed that 'The history of the Sikh religion is the history of the Sikh nation.....'¹⁴

According to Petrie Guru Gobind Singh devised measures 'for the accomplishment of his mission against the Muhammadans'. He worked out 'the doctrine of Khalsa', the faith of the 'pure', the 'elect'. By the rite of Pahul was conferred the title of 'Singh' on the all those who entered it. In addition to the wearing of five K's, the Guru taught his followers that "they might practise arms and never show their back to the foe in the field of battle."¹⁵ Khalsa also had 'the doctrine of equality' that opened the Guru's mission to all castes. Petrie found Ibbetson correct when the latter said, 'religion became a political power, and for the first time in India a nation arose, embracing all races, all classes, and all grades of society, and banded them together in face of a foreign foe'.¹⁶

Petrie said the development of Sikhism into a nation was not without its cost. In this transformation the religious fervour 'was entirely eclipsed by military zeal'. The tenth Guru had aroused the spirit of his people "and left on it the impress of his military ambitions."¹⁷ From Guru Gobind Singh to Ranjit Singh "spiritual fervour, national pride, and anti-Islamic fanaticism operated powerfully to swell the numbers of those who embraced the Sikh faith."¹⁸

Petrie wrote that the British confronted 'warlike and politically ambitious nation' of the Sikhs by appropriating to themselves Guru Gobind Singh's teachings. They saw from the history of "the Sikh Mazhabi regimentsthat the teachings of the Guru have the magical effect of transforming even periahs and out-castes through an interminable line of hereditary into brave and staunch soldiers."¹⁹ The Sikhs were enrolled in the army. The army enforced the Khalsa code, Pahul and an endeavour was

13. See, foot note from 01 to 07 as added by Ganda Singh to 'Recent Developments in Sikh Politics', *The Panjab Past and Present*, Oct. 1970, pp. 302-305. Hereafter to be referred as *The PPP*, Oct. 1970-N.S.

14. *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 326.

15. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 304.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.* p.305.

18. *Ibid.*

19. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 308.

made to keep the soldiers away from idolatry. About some other steps, Petrie wrote :²⁰

Sikhs in the Indian army have been studiously 'nationalized' or encouraged to regard themselves as a totally distinct and separate nation; their national pride had been fostered by every available means and the Granth Sahib or Sikh scripture are saluted by British officers of Sikh regiments.

In short, the British Indian army became by the 20th century 'one of the principal agencies for the preservation of Sikhism'.²¹

What was the basis of such a policy? Petrie maintained that the policy was based upon the assumption that a Sikh lapsed into Hinduism without the cultivation of his faith. This degeneration did away not only his fighting capabilities but also changed his attitude towards the British. The change was from loyalty to disloyalty. Petrie went to the extent of suggesting that the Sikh youth brought up in an 'Hindu atmosphere' developed habits prejudicial to both the British rule and Christianity. In support of his argument he quoted M.A. Macauliffe.²² We know that a British imperialist newspaper in the Punjab had declared the participation of Sikh students' in the nationalist activity as apostasy. It was in June 1884,²³ and apostasy was, it was argued then, an other name for 'the agitationary spirit' directed against the government.

Petrie found that 'the cult of Guru Gobind Singh' might not work usefully and exclusively for the British any more. Already, the Chief Khalsa Diwan (est. 1902) had employed it in more than one field to yield contrary effects. First was the education field, the second was the socio-political field, the third was the historical one. To establish his thesis Petrie talked at length about the past and present of Sikh Educational Movement, the depressed classes movement, and the Sikh literary and propaganda techniques as evolved by the writers and preachers associated with or under the impact of the Chief Khalsa Diwan.

To begin with the Sikh education, Petrie wrote that the idea of a Khalsa College came in 1883.²⁴ It was also the time, we are told, the Amritsar Singh Sabha re-established itself. Soon there was the Khalsa Diwan uniting for some time the Lahore and the Amritsar Singh Sabhas. In Oct. 1884, the raja of Faridkot was the patron of Diwan while Professor Gurmukh Singh was its Secretary. However, the differences among the two leading Singh Sabhas got deepened with the appearance of Khursaid-I-Khalsa in 1885.²⁵ The issue involved was Dalip Singh's claim for the throne

20. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. Nazer Singh, *Delhi and Punjab*, (New Delhi, 1995), p. 140.

24. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 313.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

of the Punjab. This political issue led to the formation of the Lahore Khalsa Diwan in 1887. It was through the Lahore Diwan that the idea of Khalsa College began to take a shape by 1889. Needless to say that Lieutenant-Governor, Punjab, was the patron of the Lahore Sabha since its birth in 1879. With the formation of the Khalsa College Establishment Committee in 1890, a scheme was drawn by Holyrood and Bell, the persons heading the education department by turn. The college was inaugurated at Amritsar in 1892 by A.C. Lyall.

What was the college as the engine of Sikh education movement expected to perform? What did it actually accomplish? Petrie answered in detail. As to the expectation, the college was, like the Singh Sabha, the work of 'the instinct of communal self-preservation'.²⁶ The Sikh youth was to be saved from the 'teachers of other denominations' for it stood exposed to the influences hostile to the Sikh 'traditionary' habits and character such as serving the British without grudge and grumble. The government hoped the college would produce 'true Sikhs and loyal citizens'. The college was to be a 'national institution'. As such it was warmly supported and patronized by the Viceroys, the Commander-in-chiefs and the Lieutenant-Governors. Their example was followed by the army and the Sikh states. Of the subscriptions of the value of 5,50,000 raised for the college, rupees four and a half were made by the Sikh states.

Petrie implicitly conceded that the Sikh education movement shifted the centre of Singh Sabha movement from Lahore to Amritsar. Leading lights of 'the Lahore party' such as Bhai Jawahar Singh and Sir Attar Singh Bhadour joined 'the Amritsar party'. First, Jawahar Singh acted as the secretary to Khalsa College Council but he was replaced by Sundar Singh Majithia even before the end of the century. Petrie further highlighted the rise of Amritsar by showing that the initiative for the formation of Chief Khalsa Diwan came from Amritsar in November 1901,²⁷ and the Diwan was formed at Amritsar in April 1902. For him, the Khalsa College was 'a child of the Chief Khalsa Diwan', and the Diwan controlled it.

How did the control of the college passed into the hands of Chief Khalsa Diwan leadership? Petrie did not disclose. But he noticed as to how this institution shaped the relationship between the Sikhs and the British regime. Trouble for the administration began in 1904 when the Punjab Government and the Sikh states were forced to come to the aid of college in order to strengthen its crumbling finances. The Govt. made a special grant of 50,000 rupees. The Sikh states contributed thirteen/fourteen lakhs.²⁸ A nine member management committee was created.

The measures of 1904 did not help much to retrieve the college

26. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 313.

27. *Ibid.*, p.312.

28. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 314.

situation. Petrie says the disloyal unrest of 1907 had its impact upon the Sikhs. Consequently, the government control was introduced 'into management of the institution'.²⁹ The Council as well as management committee were to be headed by the Commissioner of the Division. He noticed that "the tone of the institution has if any thing deteriorated since the change was effected."³⁰

In 1908 the Sikh Educational Conference held its first session at Gujranwala. Its second, the third and the fourth sessions were held at Lahore, Amritsar and Rawalpindi, respectively. Petrie discussed the origin of the conference and found it to be the work of four factors.³¹ First, Tikka of Nabha was the prime mover for organizing the conference in 1908. As a member of the Viceroy's Council, he had been influenced by the 'Bengali and Maratha' leaders who had advised him to promote education for the national progress. Secondly, the conference was the work of the Chief Khalsa Diwan which was unhappy with the Govt. over the Khalsa College issue. Thirdly, it was "started by the malcontents among the Sikhs, so that by appearing to go one step better even than government in the matter of Sikh education....."³² Doing so they wanted to gain the goodwill and support of the masses.

To these three causes, Petrie added one more. It was 'the intensification of communal rivalry'. Speaking on the whole, Petrie did not find genuine educational cause of, and for, the Sikh Educational Conference. He intended to reduce it into a political platform for the 'neo-Sikh Party' bent upon (I) establishing its control over the Golden Temple and the other Gurdwaras, and (II) politicalizing the Sikh identity/nationality with a view to establish Sikh power.

Petrie did not stop at that. He had consistently made a difference between the Tatt Khalsa as produced by the British army or the early Singh Sabhas and 'the neo-Sikhs' who were new kind of Tatt Khalsa produced by the anti-British politicization from the ranks of the Chief Khalsa Diwan in the 20th century.

Petrie saw change in the concerns of the Tatt Khalsa were equally marked through the depressed classes movement.³³ The Shudhi movement and the communal representation made the low caste Sikhs politically significant because 'the numbers' began to be counted for the polity. To check the Arya Samaj and others from converting the caste Sikhs, the Chief Khalsa Diwan took up the cause of the depressed classes. Ideologically, the Diwan preached that the Khalsa *rahit* didn't accept caste difference or discrimination. Practically they demanded that the priests, especially of the

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-14.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

32. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 235.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 319-20.

Golden Temple must treat the low castes in the same way as they deal with the twice born. Also they held meetings to counter the Arya Samaj and its proselytizing activities. The Diwan leadership confronted the Aryas in the Jullandhar and Lyallpur districts.³⁴

Likewise the *Khalsa Biradari* with the moral support of high class Sikh leaders such as Sundar Singh Majithia and Mehar Singh Chawla of Lahore sought to achieve their object of "the levelling down class distinctions in the way of interdinning and intermarrying ..."³⁵ The *Biradari* "advocates reception into the Sikh brotherhood of all persons of whatever class who were previously included in Sikhism."³⁶ According to Petrie this development had a 'disturbing effect on religious beliefs' of the Tatt Khalsa.

The *Biradari* and its supporters including the members of the Chief Khalsa Diwan had more radical views about caste and its role in Sikhism. Unlike them, the Sikh Jats, Khatri and Brahmins backed by the Sikh priests believed in their own superiority, and refused to go along with the former. Referring to this clash between the Priests and the radical Sikhs Petrie wrote that the Pujaries began to "refuse their admission to places of worship and to reject their offerings."³⁷ This 'taint of Hinduism' permeated Sikhism strongly, wrote he.

Yet Petrie found fault with the radical or anti-caste portion of the Tatt Khalsa. He knew that this portion had no doubt behind its programme of levelling down caste and social distinction, the weight of the teachings of the 10th Guru.³⁸ But 'their indiscriminate and reckless proselytizing is thing so far unknown in Sikh history and they are prepared to receive direct into the fold of Sikhism. Musalmans and other non-Hindus with far less scruple than was shown even by the tenth Guru Himself.'³⁹

Petrie viewed this radical development as politically and socially destabilizing. Politically, it was difficult to absorb the neo-converts for they were not Sikhs by tradition or sentiments. For Petrie Sikh religion had loyalty to the British as an essential-characteristic. The neo-converts and their champions were likely to miss this aspect of Sikhism as it was evident from the fact the Chief Khalsa Diwan had already turned its back to the priests and the Gurdwaras. Moreover, the radical reformers as a whole were at their own doing little for the religious education of the converted Sikhs. Petrie maintained that the Chief Khalsa Diwan suffered from 'the freedom of thought and laxity of observance' of the existing Sikh norms. This advanced party stood alienated from the 'general Sikh orthodoxy'. But this was not the real cause for Petrie's worry. The problem was, wrote he, this advanced

34. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, P.320.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, p. 322.

38. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, pp. 322-23.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

party in its method and objective was converging on the Arya Samaj that stood for 'great proselytizing zeal but an exceedingly scanty learning of genuine religion.'⁴⁰

Petrie described the radical Sikh reformers as 'the neo-Sikhs'. He felt that the differences between the Aryas and the 'neo-Sikhs' were not unsurmountable.⁴¹ Because the kine-killing united them. Moreover, the political approach towards the caste issue was common to the two. Petrie declared that the differences between the politicized Aryas and the neo-Sikhs were confined to the smoking and the five K's. For Petrie, these differences were 'exceedingly superficial'⁴² and hence ephemeral. In his view, the Aryas and the neo-Sikhs were the same for their political approach : the Aryas wanted to unite the people for the establishment of 'Vedic church' and Hindu nation while the neo-Sikhs were working for the 'Sikh nation' and its power.

Petrie's demarcation of the neo-Sikhs from the Tatt Khalsa turned-out to be a segregation between communalism and nationalism and its secularization. He wrote :⁴³

If Tat Khalsaism and neo Sikhism are to be distinguished, it may be said that the Tat Khalsa have at heart the consolidation of the Sikhs purely with the view of enabling them to maintain a separate communal existence, while the neo-Sikh party aims at nothing short of the formation of a Sikh nation and the re-establishment of Sikh rule in the Punjab.

Petrie identified the Chief Khalsa Diwan as the Chief centre of *Tatt Khalsaism* and neo-Sikhism. He was informed that non-political element in the Tatt Khalsa is 'small and uninfluential'. Infact, the adoption of Tatt Khalsa principles "tended to become the first step towards the assimilation of the political doctrines of neo-Sikhism."⁴⁴ Yet the neo-Sikhism was not the official creed of Chief Khalsa Diwan. However, it was certainly the work of "agents and institutions controlled by it."⁴⁵

Petrie named 'the agents and institutions' spreading neo-Sikhism. The institutions were the Sikh Educational Conference and Sikh Journalism. The agents were the preachers or *Updeshiks* employed/patronized by the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Petrie's detailed reference to the Sikh Educational Conference we have already seen. Let us turn to Sikh Journalism and the *Updeshiks*.

First feature of Sikh Journalism and the *Updesh* of the strolling preachers was the use of Sikh history to explain the cause of, and the remedy

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, p. 424.

42. See., *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 424.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

45. *Ibid.*

for, the crises the Sikh community was facing. The crises was their economic, political, cultural and religious decline. But it was the most evident from their genuine or projected 'educational backwardness'. In education was included religious instruction, and more so religio-historical awareness, as well. The remedy was sought in the revival of Sikhism. Noticing the use of Sikh history as an ideological tool by the neo-Sikhs, Petrie wrote:⁴⁶

The history of Sikh religion is the history of the Sikh nation, and it is easy to see on what grounds the Tat Khalsa have not only discarded a faith which no longer appeals to them but have chosen to pose as the only true followers of a religion through which they can still make a powerful appeal to Sikh national pride.

The 'grounds' on which the neo-Sikhs had departed with the Tatt-Khalsa, wrote Petrie, was the formers' view that the over all poor plight of the Sikhs under the British was the same it was during the Mughal rule.⁴⁷ This historical comparison held the British responsible for the Sikh decline, it also justified the Sikh demand for 'swaraj' - that had already come to mean political independence from the British rule. The cruelty and oppression of the British were to be met with 'unity and valour' by the Sikhs, so went the argument of the neo-Sikhs. Call for the 'rise' was practically a voice for rebellion.

Secondly, 'the nationalistic organs' such *Prem* from Ferozepur and *Sacha Dhandora* from Lyallpur came into being. On September 22, 1909, the *Dhandora* published an article entitled 'Coercive Policy in India'. The article was a sketch of Sikh history "to show the Gurus and their Sikhs acting on the motto of 'without fear, without animosity' had adopted the policy of having every one and did not take up arms even when their heads were cut-off, but when it came to the protection of religion and the defenceless poor, they took it upon themselves to fight for them..... This policy was to put a stop to oppression. They made people not pay land revenue leaders gave their lives to stop it, and if they did not stop it, the others put a stop to it."⁴⁸

The writers such as the author of *Sachhi yadgar* (January 1911) and *Sikh Vidya Utte Lekh* as well as the *Updeshiks* were even more vocal in their concern for 'the poor and defenceless'. In fact, the Sikh community as such was given a new image by them all together. It was an image of poor, defenceless and oppressed people looking towards their martial/glorious past as a remedy for their present day ills. *Sachhi Yadgar* was, in the words of Petrie:⁴⁹

46. See, *The PPP.*, Oct. 1970, p.326.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 325-27.

48. See, *The PPP.*, Oct. 1970, p. 328.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 329.

The leaflet is a glorification of the tenth Guru, whose teachings the Chief Khalsa Diwan more particularly affects, and it is highly coloured with the militant characteristics of the Khalsa religion.

Petrie did not say so but it was evident to him that the cult of Guru Gobind Singh as preserved by the British through their Military Department was being put to a different use by the neo-Sikhs.

Lastly, Petrie felt the impact of new ideas coming from England, America and Canada. The impact was visible from the Sikh newspapers and the tone of the Khalsa College that was getting more and more rebellious. For example the leading Sikh newspaper, *The Khalsa Advocate* published some extracts from the 'seditious Gaelic American newspaper'.⁵⁰ Likewise, *Free Hindustan*, an organ run by the Indian patriots in America to organize what was later called the Gadar, was found in circulation in Khalsa College.⁵¹

Petrie recorded the expansion of the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Its branches were in Sindh, the North-West Frontier Province, Oudh and Bengal. Nearer home the schemes of the Diwan such as the Khalsa College movement, the depressed classes' movement and the Sikh Educational Conference were popular with the rulers and the people of Sikh states. Even the existence of Khalsa Diwans such as the Nabha backed Central Khalsa Diwan did not dampen in any way the support for the Educational Conference. By 1910 Patiala ruler turned out to be the most enthusiastic supporter of the conference.⁵² The Singh Sabhas in places like Larkana (Sindh), Shikarpur, Karachi, Poona, Sasaram (Bengal), Calcutta and Rangoon actively supported the Chief Khalsa Diwan. Preachers visited these Sabhas to spread Sikhism and "collect money for educational and other purposes".⁵³

Petrie considered the educational derive of the Diwan as the most dangerous. It was for more than one reason. First, it had made education 'a war cry'. Consequently, the demand for 'national education' aimed at excluding the Government from the field. Simultaneously, it secured the support of non-Sikhs for the education schemes of the Diwan.

Secondly, the Sikh Educational Conference was an opening for all kind of Sikhs and influences. Petrie highlighted the fact of the rise of Aroras, a business community, through the Chief Khalsa Diwan and its allied concern in the Punjab and Sindh Bank. Their ascendancy was not to the liking of many. Likewise, the Majha-Malwa jealously as represented by the birth of the Central Khalsa Diwan still interfered 'with concerted action on the part of the Sikhs as a community'.⁵⁴ Yet the spread of education was

50. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 316.

51. *Ibid.*, p.333.

52. *Ibid.*, p.338.

53. See, *The PPP*, Oct. 1970, p. 338.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

likely to dissolve the internal differences among the Sikhs by bridging the communication gap between the urban and the rural or the Majha and Malwa Sikhs.⁵⁵

Lastly, the education and the educators, especially the preachers of the Diwan had already become factors for promoting anti-British (Sikh) nationalism.

Due to all these reasons, the Chief Khalsa Diwan should not be allowed "a free hand in moulding the character and opinion of the rising generation of Sikhs",⁵⁶ wrote Petrie. The Government could not afford to remain indifferent to Diwan's schemes in the field of education. The least it should ignore the Sikh Educational Conference that was even more under the control of neo-Sikhs.

Petrie knew the way the Tatt Khalsa and more so the neo-Sikhs were moving along. Being already in command of 'politics', their next target was the Gurdwaras, especially the Golden Temple. Petrie said it was probable that they might be a success in that venture too.⁵⁷

55. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

56. See., *The PPP*, Oct, 1970, p. 344.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

JINNAH, PUNJAB PROVINCIAL MUSLIM LEAGUE AND PARTITION : AN ANALYSIS

Amarjit Singh*

The independence of India in 1947 was the result of a long drawn struggle carried on by the people of India against the British Raj. However, the another side of the independence was the partition of India, which was one of the most brutal and inhuman events in the history of the mankind. The partition of India, was infact, the partition of Punjab and Bengal. A great amount of lawlessness, communal violence, riots, killings, abductions and rapes were reported from the either side of the border. Punjab suffered the worst of all that happened during this trauma of partition. The magnitude of the human massacre in this province was unparalleled, morality had turned into brutality. The partition resulted in about half a million casualties and the forced migration of about twelve million people.¹

The partition of India and the foundation of Pakistan was an event of great and significant historical importance with far reaching consequences for India and Pakistan. It has thus attracted the attention of the historical writings, One of the schools of historiography is of the view that the 'Muslim separatism' and Muslim communal politics was essentially responsible for the partition which began organizing itself during the political tenure of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and culminated under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The popular historiography of Pakistan is of the view that the partition was essentially a final triumph of Muslim nationalism which was based on the idea of Two-Nation theory and had emerged in an organized form under the colonial state. According to this opinion the Muslims have always maintained their separate homogenous identity as distinct from the Hindus since the medieval time and thus the partition lay embedded in the logic of Indian history. Another view point has suggested that the Hindu Communal Consciousness, follies of the Congress and the widening economic disparity between Hindus and Muslims subsequently led to the partition. It has also been argued from another historiographic view point that the policies and politics of the British essentially provided the bases of the partition and rest is the history.

The author of the present paper is of the view that the Muslim

* Department of History, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra (Haryana).

1. R.J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps and India*, Oxford, 1979, p. 327;
H.V. Hodson, *The Great Divide*, London, 1969, p. 418.

communal politics consolidated itself at the platform of All India Muslim League, emerged as the sole representative body of the Muslims of India under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, challenged the Indian Nationalism and resulted in the partition of India. Muhammad Ali Jinnah after 1935 began to reorganize the Muslim League, established associations at the provincial level, made attempts to win over the Muslim leadership at the provincial level and desired to convert the All India Muslim League as a Muslim Mass Movement against the Indian National Congress.² The All India Muslim League contested the Provincial Assembly elections of 1936-37 under the leadership of Jinnah. During the election campaign the Congress made its best efforts to carry the message of Indian nationalism to all parts of the country whereas the Muslim League utilized the campaign to spread the message of Muslim nationalism among the Muslims of India.

During the election campaign of 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru, the chief campaigner on behalf of the Congress as well as its President, emphasized that what was taking place in India was not a routine contest between a number of political parties as happens during elections in free countries. He remarked that it was a contest between two forces, the Congress as representing the will to freedom of the nation, and the British Government in India and its supporters who oppose this urge and try to suppress it. Intermediate groups, whatever virtue they may possess, fade out or line up with one of the principal forces.³ However, Jinnah refused to accept this line and he retorted that there was a third party, namely Musalmans and they were not going to be dictated to by anybody. He further said that although the Muslims were ready, as equal partners, to work for a settlement but he vehemently protested to the Congress interfering in the affairs of Muslims by putting up Muslim candidates in opposition to the League candidates.⁴

However, the Muslim League fared badly in the elections, winning only 105 out of 482 total Muslim seats in all the Muslim Legislatures. Its position in the Muslim majority province was worst, it could not get a single seat in the North-West Frontier Province and Sind and got only one out of the 86 Muslim seats in the Punjab, its position in Bengal was slightly better, with 37 out of a total of 119 Muslim seats. The position of the League in the Hindu majority provinces was somewhat comfortable. It secured 20 out of 39 Muslim seats in Bombay, it won 27 out of 64 Muslim seats in United Provinces, 11 out of 28 Muslim seats in Madras, 9 out of 34 Muslim seats in Assam and none at all in Bihar, Orissa and Central Provinces.⁵

The Congress, However, had done much worse than the League so

2. Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, Oxford, 1985, pp. 140-148.

3. S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. VII, New Delhi, 1975, p. 468.

4. Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah : The Nation's Voice, Speeches and Statements*, Karachi, 1992, p. 108.

5. Gowher Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India*, London, 1978, pp. 25-27.

far as the Muslim seats were concerned. For it had contested only 58 and secured only 26 Muslim seats all over India, and having no representation on Muslim seats at all in a number of provinces. The bulk of the Muslim seats had gone to the provincial parties, like the Unionist party in the Punjab, the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal, National Agriculturist Party in United Provinces and Independent Muslim Party in Sind.⁶

The issue of the Congress League coalition ministry formation in United Provinces after the election has provoked much controversy among historians. It has been generally argued by many historians that had there been a coalition government between Congress and the Muslim League the partition might possibly have been averted. Jinnah might not have been pushed towards extreme communal politics from where he had no choice but to ask for Pakistan.⁷ It has been argued that the Congress refusal to share power with the League in 1937 deeply offended the Muslims and Jinnah and widened the breach between the Congress and the Muslim League. It has been suggested that the Congress refusal to collaborate with the League in 1937 was a crass error of political judgement and a failure to understand the Muslim psyche.⁸ Henceforth, the Muslims began to rally behind the League and the League gained strength to strength.

However, there is another view point on this significant issue. It has also been argued that a coalition government of Congress and Muslim League in the United Provinces in 1937, though very much on the agenda of a few individuals, was completely marginal and actually contradictory to the long-term interests or schemes of the Congress as well as of the Muslim League. It has been suggested that the argument advocating the coalition is based on fragile and even faulty empirical premises and secondly a provincial episode of the abortive coalition can not be considered responsible for such a significant event, that is the partition of India.⁹

It has also been argued by the historians that the failure of the talks of Congress-League coalition ministry formation in the United Provinces turned the Muslim League towards the ideal of a separate, sovereign Muslim state, is based on pure imagination and wishful thinking. There is incontrovertible evidence which shows that even before the beginning of the final round of talks for the formation of the so-called coalition ministry in the United Provinces, Jinnah had felt decisively drawn towards the ideal of a separate, sovereign state, though for tactical reasons he had chosen not to

6. *Ibid.*

7. Z.H. Zaidi, "Aspects of the Development of Muslim League Policy 1937-1947", C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India : Policies and perspectives 1935-1947*, London, 1970, pp.256-257.

8. V.N. Datta, "Interpreting Partition", General Presidential Address, *Indian History Congress*, Fifty-Seventh Session, December 1996, Madras, p.13.

9. Salil Mishra, *A Narrative of Communal Politics : Uttar Pradesh 1937-39*, New Delhi, 2001, pp.126-127.

reveal it to the public for the time being. It has been suggested that the Muslim League had already taken a new turn as a result of the emergence of the Congress as the dominant parliamentary party in all Hindu majority provinces which therefore strengthened the Muslim elite's attraction for a separate sovereign state of their own.¹⁰

The author of the present paper is of the view that in 1937 the Muslim League and Jinnah were neither defeated by and nor betrayed by the Congress. Jinnah, in fact, was defeated, betrayed and challenged in his own constituencies. Muslims of India did not accept the Muslim League as their representative body and at the same time provincial Muslim leaders also refused to support or collaborate with the Muslim League. Muslims of India rejected both, Muslim League as well as the Congress, and acknowledged the provincial Muslim political parties as their representative organizations. The attitude of the provincial political parties on the communal issue was not much different from that of the Muslim League.

The Muslim League was essentially a communal party even before 1937 and during the election campaign of 1937 Jinnah, to a large extent, began to emphasize that Muslims of India must unite themselves as a Nation. However, the approach of the League, its programmes, methods and tactics were not loaded with the religion nor it was making use of the religious appeals and Islamic symbols. Jinnah was essentially a pragmatic, shrewd and extra-ordinary calculative political leader. Once defeated, Jinnah realized the need to transform the nature, programmes, methods and tactics of the Muslim League, in order to project the League as the sole representative body of the Muslims of India. Jinnah, now, began to chalk-out the long-term as well as the short-term strategies and skillful techniques to won over the Muslims of India, the Provincial Muslim leaders, the Raj and to challenge the Congress. He began to condemn the Congress vehemently and branded it a Hindu communal organization.

It was against this background that the twenty-fifth session of the All India Muslim League was held at Lucknow in October 1937. This session marked the beginning of a new politic era in the history of the Muslim League, Jinnah provided Islamic outlook to his organization. Not only a change in the political position but also for the first time, Jinnah publicly appeared wearing a black Punjabi Sherwani long coat and a Persian cap which was also Islamic in its symbolic significance. In his Presidential address, Jinnah advised the Muslims of India to enlist themselves by hundreds and thousands as quickly as they can as members of the All India Muslim League, provincial Leagues and district Leagues. Jinnah commanded the Muslims to organize themselves, established their solidarity, complete unity and equipped themselves as trained and disciplined soldiers.

10. Bimal Prasad, *Pathway to India's Partition: A Nation within A Nation*, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 392-407.

Jinnah further asserted that eighty millions of Musalmans in India have nothing to fear. They had their destiny in their hands and as a well-knit, solid, organized, unified force can face any danger, and withstand any opposition to its united front and wishes. They must take their vital decisions, that may be grave and momentous and far reaching in their consequences.¹¹

Regarding the attitude of the Congress, Jinnah said in his Presidential address that, "the present leadership of the Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Muslims of India more and more, by pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu's, and since they have formed governments in the six provinces where they are in a majority, they have by their words, deeds and programme shown, more and more, that the Muslims, cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hands."¹²

Jinnah, being a pragmatic and shrewd politician, now realized the importance of the Muslim majority provinces, especially of the Punjab and thus he had already invited Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, the premier of Punjab, to take part in the session of the All India Muslim League at Lucknow in October 1937. Jinnah persuaded Sir Sikander Hayat Khan to sign a pact with him, according to this pact Sir Sikander accepted Jinnah as the sole spokesman of the Muslim India whereas Jinnah assured him not to interfere into the internal politics of the Punjab.¹³ Jinnah-Sikander Pact was a resounding achievement of Jinnah and was a fine example of his short-term and long-term strategy. Earlier in 1936 when Jinnah made an attempt to had an alliance with the Muslim leaders of the Punjab, he was severely rebuked and was warned by Sir Sikander to keep his finger out of the Punjab pie.¹⁴ But this time Jinnah became successful to conquer that Punjab baron because he had accepted the terms of Sir Sikander, who was one of the tallest leaders of the Muslim India.

Jinnah, now, came to be a symbol of Muslim destiny and began to be greeted in the country as the sole spokesman of the Muslims. With this new found strength Jinnah on the one hand turned hostile to the Congress and its idea of Indian nationalism and on the other hand manoeuvred to obtain the support of the Raj for the cause of the Muslim League. Jinnah utilized the pact to strengthen the Muslim League at the national level and to consolidate the concept of Muslim nationalism. The far reaching consequences of the pact also proved beneficial for the Muslim League in Punjab although to begin with, Jinnah conceded to the Unionists all rights in

11. S.S. Pirzada (ed.), *Foundations of Pakistan : All India Muslim League Documents 1906-1947*, Vol. II, Karachi, 1970, pp. 272-73.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

13. M.A.H. Isphani, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah As I Knew Him*, Karachi, 1966, pp. 50-51.

14. Waheed Ahmad (ed.), *Letters of Mian Fazl-i-Hussain*, Lahore, 1977, p. 428; Z.H. Zaidi (ed.), *M.A. Jinnah-Isphani Correspondence. 1936-1946*, Karachi, 1976, pp. 13-14.

Punjab politics and even, behaved indifferently with Sir Muhammad Iqbal and other leaders of the Punjab Muslim League.¹⁵

Regarding this Jinnah-Sikander pact, Stanley Wolpert has observed that, "without the Punjab, the League had not real heartland of power, no core around which to build its potential claim to nationhood. The Punjab was more than just a bare Muslim majority province. The Punjab meant Pakistan, made Pakistan possible. Bengal was too remote from the rest of Muslim India, as was Hyderabad. Sind, the North-West Frontier, Baluchistan and Kashmir, were Islands of Muslim dominance, yet none was large enough, none strong enough to stand along. The Punjab was the mortar that integrated, unified, and bridge everyone of those other, northwest provincial units. The Punjab was Pakistan's first and most important capital either, and by luring Sir Sikander into his party's tent, Jinnah raised the green flag of the League with its giant 'P', signaling the birth of a nation that was to remain in the womb of British India for precisely one decade".¹⁶

The fate of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League was, inextricably linked to the fortunes of Muslim League in the national politics. A decisive turn for the better for All India Muslims League occurred with the beginning of the Second World War in September 1939. The war provided an opportunity to Jinnah to raise the influence of the Muslim League in the Indian politics by supporting the British Raj in its war efforts whereas the Congress was vehemently opposing the unconditional war efforts. The British Raj which was badly in need of Jinnah's support at this crucial hour, began to treat Jinnah on equal footing with Gandhi.¹⁷ Jinnah himself remarked, "after the war was declared, the Viceroy naturally wanted help from the Muslim League. It was only then that he realized that the Muslim League was a power. For it will be remembered that upto the time of the declaration of the war, the Viceroy never thought of me but of Gandhi and Gandhi alone".¹⁸ This finally resulted in Raj's acceptance of Muslim League as the sole representative body of the Muslim India and Jinnah as its sole spokesman.

The resignation of the Congress ministries in October 1939 was a blunder of great magnitude which provided one more opportunity to Jinnah. Jinnah seized this opportunity with both hands and observed it as a Day of Deliverance. The Congress, till then well-entrenched having decimated Muslim League in the elections of 1937, left a political void. Jinnah, in a political master stroke, rushed to fill this void by promising support to the Raj in its hour of need. This gave the League a leverage with the Raj it had never enjoyed before. This encouraged the Muslim League to pass the

15. 'Jinnah to Barkat Ali', November 20, 1937; S.Q. Hussain Jafri (ed.), *Quaid-i-Azam's Correspondence with Punjab Muslim Leaders*, Lahore, 1977, p. 48.

16. Stanley Wolpert, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

17. Linlithgow to Zetland, September 5, 1939, Linlithgow Papers.

18. Jamal-ud-Din Ahmad (ed.), *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, Vol. I., p. 154.

historic 'Pakistan resolution' at Lahore in March, 1940, at the twenty-seventh session of the All India Muslim League and demanded the establishment of an independent and separate Muslim Nation in the name of Pakistan.¹⁹

Pakistan was not explicitly mentioned, nor was it clear from the language of the resolution whether a single Muslim state of both north-western and eastern zones of India had been envisioned or two separate 'autonomous' independent states, one in the north-west and other in the eastern zone. However, it became clear from the assertion of Jinnah that Muslim League envisaged a single sovereign Pakistan State.²⁰ The Pakistan resolution exposed the Congress pretensions to represent the whole of India.²¹

The Pakistan resolution stirred the politics of Punjab partly because it gave Jinnah a foothold in the province and partly because of the uncertain future it hold out for the Sikhs and Hindus.²² Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, despite the fact that he did not like this resolution was not in a position to oppose it, and he and his Unionist party became a party to this resolution. Jinnah, in a political master stroke, passed the Pakistan resolution in Punjab province, which though central to its future scheme of things, was still not a happy hunting ground for it due to a strong Unionist presence. With the Pakistan resolution the Muslim League gained both the national as well as the provincial level. By making the Unionist a party to this resolution the League undermined their secular credentials. This marked the beginning of the end of the broad-based, inter-community social coalition that the Unionists represented in Punjab. This eventually led to the emasculation of Unionist party and a concomitant ascendancy of the League.

The Punjab Provincial Muslim League, as directed by Jinnah, after the Pakistan resolution began a relentless struggle against the hegemony of the Unionist party and also started vigorous campaign for the cause of Muslim League and Pakistan. To further strengthen his position in Punjab, Jinnah finally expelled Sir Sikander Hayat Khan from the All India Muslim League Council and Muslim League Working Committee in July 1942.²³ It was said that Sir Sikander was not propagating the ideal of the League and the demand of Pakistan, thus, he was expelled from the League Council. Jinnah had already compelled Sir Sikander to resign from the National Defence Council.²⁴

In November 1942, Jinnah visited Punjab and launched his attack

19. S.S. Pirzada (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 347.

20. S.S. Pirzada (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 337.

21. Henry Craik to Linlithgow, April 30, 1940, Linlithgow Papers.

22. Anita Inder Singh, *The origins of the partition of India 1936-1947*, New Delhi, 1987, p. 59.

23. M.A.H. Isphani, *Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah as I Knew Him*, Karachi, 1966, p. 58.

24. Linlithgow to Amery, August 30, 1941, Linlithgow Papers.

against the Unionist ministry. He asserted, in his public meetings, that the League had made enormous strides in recent years towards attaining the goal of Pakistan, the British should acknowledge the right of Muslims to self-determination and promise to give effect to the verdict of a Muslim plebiscite. He publicly criticized the federation scheme of Sikander Hayat Khan.²⁵ The meetings of Jinnah had attracted large audiences of between ten to thirty thousand persons and had given a fillip to the Pakistan movement. However, the Unionist party under the leadership of Sikander Hayat Khan was still dominating the politics of the province. After the sudden death of Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, in December 1942, the Unionist party started losing political ground and faced erosion of its social base to Muslim League.²⁶ This was due to League's strong religious appeal, its superior organizational abilities and the role played by the Punjab Muslim Students Federation under the inspiration of Jinnah. Thereafter, the Provincial League went from strength to strength.

At the annual session of the All India Muslim League held at Delhi in April 1943, Jinnah appealed to Muslim leaders of Punjab to assemble under the flag of Muslim League and to work for the establishment of the Muslim Nation. He said that, "I regret to say that the Punjab has not yet played the part that ought to play and is entitled to play, because, remember, the Punjab is the corner stone of Pakistan. I particularly appeal to the delegates from Punjab, people are alright in Punjab when you go back, please – I would not say anything more—please substitute the love of Islam and your nation in the place of sectional interest, jealousies, tribal nations and selfishness."²⁷

Jinnah once again came to Punjab in March 1944 for talks with Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, the premier of Punjab. Jinnah while discussing the situation with Provincial Muslim Leaguers had emphasized that the Unionist party should be liquidated.²⁸ Jinnah told Khizar Hayat Khan that the Muslim League rather than the Unionist party formed the coalition ministry with the non-Muslims and that its name be changed to Muslim League Coalition Party.²⁹ However, Khizar Hayat Khan refused to accept the demands of Jinnah, thus, Jinnah-Khizar negotiations finally broke down in April, 1944.

Afterwards, the Committee of Action, on the recommendation of Jinnah, resolved to remove Khizar Hayat Khan from membership of the Muslim League in view of the breach of the party discipline and contravention of rules, principles and policies of the Muslim League that he had committed.³⁰ The Council of All India Muslim League also took up the

25. B.J. Glancy to Linlithgow, November 28, 1942, Linlithgow Papers.

26. Linlithgow to Amery, December 28, 1942, Linlithgow Papers.

27. S.S. Pirzada (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 406.

28. *The Eastern Times*, Lahore, March 23, 1944.

29. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1944.

30. *Ibid.*, May 6, 1944.

matter and passed the following resolution – This Council approves and endorse the action taken by the Committee of Action in expelling Malik Khizar Hayat Khan, the Premier of Punjab, from the Muslim League for his utter disregard of the wishes of the Muslims of India in general and the Muslims of Punjab in particular'.³¹

Thus a League-Unionist alliance which had survived for seven years, came to an end. This marked the beginning of a new era in the provincial politics. Although the League failed in its efforts to gain control of the ministry of the province, but it had freed itself from the clutches of the Unionist party. As many as eighteen members from the Unionist benches defected to the League and an independent Muslim League party was constituted in the Assembly under the leadership of Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan.³² It gave a fought time to the ruling benches in the Assembly. The Provincial League also made in roads into the countryside of the Punjab. The prominent leaders of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League such as Nawab Iftikhar Husain Khan of Mamdot, Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Malik Barkat Ali, Firoz Khan Noon and Raja Ghaznafar Ali Khan were directed by Jinnah to conduct an extensive and intensive tour of the province and to propagate the demand of Pakistan among the Muslims of Punjab.³³

The Provincial Muslim League, during its campaign programmes and meetings, adopted religious symbols. The League appealed to the Punjab Muslims to support the demand of Pakistan in the name of Islam. The religious festivals such as Id were used by the League to spread its message and to promote unity and social solidarity amongst the Muslims of Punjab.³⁴ Mosques, because of their importance as centres of Muslim life, were used to spread League propaganda.

League's meetings were regularly held in mosques, especially after the Friday prayers.³⁵ The *Quran* was also frequently paraded as the League's symbol and pledges to support it being made on it.³⁶ The Muslim League's workers always delivered emotional speeches, their appeals always commence with a text from the *Quran*, invoking God's protection and praising his wisdom. Very often, poems from Iqbal's poetry were also declaimed at such meetings. The Provincial Muslim League, by the end of 1945, consolidated the Muslim nationalism in Punjab and the demand of Pakistan became popular among the Muslims of Punjab.³⁷

Jinnah, during this interval, further strengthened his position at the

31. S.S. Pirzada (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 498.

32. *The Eastern Times*, Lahore, May 15, 1944.

33. S.Q. Hussain Jafri (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 77-80.

34. S.S. Pirzada (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 480.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 482.

36. Shamsul Hasan Collection, *Punjab*, Vol. I, p. 35.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

national level. During the Gandhi-Jinnah negotiations, based on Rajagopalachari formula, Jinnah told Gandhi that the only acceptable solution to the Muslim League was to accept the two nation theory and division of India into Pakistan and Hindustan.³⁸ Whereas, Gandhi rejected the two-nation theory and was advocating some form of self determination for Muslims in United India, thus, in principle Gandhi clearly conceded the demand of Pakistan.³⁹ Although this negotiation of September, 1944, was finally broke down but the refusal of Jinnah was actuated by the fact that he was unwilling to accept anything less than an autonomous and independent Pakistan and it has increasingly added to the prestige and status of Jinnah and the League.⁴⁰ The failure of the negotiations also resulted in the growth of the League in Punjab. Wavell has also recorded his observation and has said that it may had increase Jinnah's prestige with his followers.⁴¹

At the Simla Conference of June-July, 1945, Jinnah adopted a rigid attitude regarding the nomination of the Muslim members only by the Muslim League,⁴² which led to the failure of the Conference. The British by bringing the conference to an end ensured that the League's position was not jeopardized. The success of the Conference as desired by the Congress would have seriously effected his position as sole spokesman of Muslims and thereby weaken his authority to establish his claim for a separate homeland. Though the British considered Jinnah's claim to be wrong and unfounded, yet they allowed Jinnah to wreck the Conference.⁴³ Thus, the status of Jinnah was elevated to new heights and Pakistan gathered more adherents. The Wavering Unionist Muslims in Punjab began to gravitate towards the Muslim League and its demand of Pakistan. Therefore, the failure of the Simla Conference strengthened the cause of the Muslim League in Punjab.

The Punjab Muslim Students' Federations, between July 1945 to March 1947, waged a relentless campaign for the cause of the Muslim League and demand of Pakistan. They embarked on a highly organized, disciplined and dedicated campaign fanning out to the remotest corners of the Muslim Majority areas of the province. They made extensive use of religious symbols and Islamic appeals to crystallize a unified pan-national Muslim identity which, according to them, had a common destiny, and

38. Jinnah to Gandhi, September 10, 1944, *Collected Works of Mahatama Gandhi*, Vol. LXXXVIII, pp. 89-90.

39. Gandhi to Jinnah, September, 11, 1944, *Ibid.*, p. 98.

40. Punjab fortnightly Report for the First half of October 1944, Home Political, File No. 18/10/1944.

41. Wavell to Amery, September 29, 1944, N. Mansergh and Penderel Moon (eds.), *Constitutional Relations Between Britain and India : The Transfer of Power, 1942-1947*, Vol. V, 1975, pp. 56-57.

42. Wavell to Amery, June 27, 1945, *Ibid.*, pp. 1165-67.

43. R.J. Moore, 'Jinnah and The Pakistan Demand', *Modern Asian Studies*, October, 1983, p. 580.

common goal i.e. Pakistan. They presented Pakistan as the panacea of all Muslim grievances, both perceived as well as genuine. The methods they employed for their purpose were straight forward and loaded with religion. They made extensive use of religious platforms like Fridays' prayers in Mosques, evening prayers and public parading of the Holy *Quran*. The idea was to extract commitment for the cause of Pakistan.⁴⁴ Lauding their role for the cause of Pakistan, Jinnah remarked, "you have done wonderful work. I have not adequate words to praise all you have done and the sacrifices you have made. How sincerely and selflessly you have worked. I have no power to give you medals and shields or squares of land. But your reward is that you are serving the nation selflessly and sincerely".⁴⁵

The Provincial Assembly elections of 1946 brought resounding victory to the Muslim League in Punjab, since it had captured seventy-five of the eighty-six Muslim seats, winning all, eleven of the urban and sixty-four of the seventy-five rural constituencies.⁴⁶ The grand victory of the Muslim League in Punjab, gave a decisive turn to the movement for Pakistan. Jinnah was overjoyed with the success of Punjab Muslim League and he sent a congratulatory message to Nawab of Mamdot, the President of the Provincial League. Jinnah wrote, 'accept hearty congratulations. The Musalmans of Punjab have proved that the Punjab is the foundation stone of Pakistan. In spite of so many hurdles 90 percent success is a resounding victory which the entire India Muslim population can be proud of - it is the fatwa of the Muslims of Punjab that the Muslim League is the only representative party of Muslims of India'.⁴⁷

Regarding the success of Muslim League in Punjab, Ian Talbot argues that the Unionist party was essentially a collaborator to the Raj and the Raj, because of its own reasons, deserted its collaborators during and after the Second World War and extended support to the Muslim League. As a result of the Unionist party was replaced by the Provincial Muslim League. David Gilmartin, on the other hand, argues that the politics and society of the Punjab was controlled and directed by the landed elite, rural aristocracy and *Pirs* and *Sajjada-Nashins*. This class, he further argues, earlier extended support to the Unionist party and later on shifted their allegiance in the favour of the Muslim League which resulted in the ascendancy of the League in the Province. Whereas the study of the present author reveals that the Punjab Muslim League's brand of puritan pristine and Arab inspired Islam, under the inspiration of Jinnah, marginalized the Unionist party, rural landed elite and *Pirs* and *Sajjada-Nashins* had also eroded their social bases. The

44. Amarjit Singh, *Punjab Divided : Politics of the Muslim League and Partition 1935-1947*, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 210-11.

45. *The Eastern Times*, Lahore, February 21, 1946.

46. *Return. Showing the result of Elections to the Central Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislatures 1945-46*, New Delhi, 1948, p. 73.

47. Ikram Ali Malik, *History of Punjab 1799-1947*, Lahore, 1970, p. 590.

extensive use of the religious symbols and Islamic appeals and propaganda for the cause of Pakistan, the present author argues, strengthened the position of the Provincial League and as a result the League emerged as a powerful mass movement.

After the elections of 1946, the Unionist party, though much weakened with 21 seats, spoiled the party for the League. It formed the government with the help of Congress and Akalis to keep the Muslim League out. The League was infuriated. Now, it went for the Jugular. The League played the communal card to the hilt and confronted its adversaries head on. On the one hand, it launched programmes like Direct Action Day which became an unending Jihad of sorts. This created fear in the minds of non-Muslims minorities and made the rapprochement impossible. This, in turn, led to final parting of the ways between the communities. On the other hand, the League sought to intimidate the much weakened Unionists into submission by launching agitations and demonstrations against them.⁴⁸ Finally the Unionist succumbed to the pressure and resigned. It was against this background that the Congress and Akali Dal, now, demanded partition of the Punjab and it was partitioned.⁴⁹ The League and Jinnah, thus, succeeded in attaining their goal of Pakistan, even it was truncated and moth-eaten.

Ayesha Jalal has observed that Jinnah did not want Pakistan nor did he will it. Jalal argues that Jinnah's demand of Pakistan was a bargaining counter, a strategy employed to assert his authority as the sole spokesman of the Muslims of India, however, lastly he had to yield to those forces over which he had no control.⁵⁰ Jalal suggests that the creation of Pakistan was the tragic collapse of Jinnah's strategy. Whereas, the study of the present author reveals that the Muslim League and Jinnah were serious about the demand of Pakistan and the creation of Pakistan was triumph of Jinnah's strategy although it was maimed and mutilated.

48. Amarjit Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

49. Jawaharlal Nehru to Mountbatten, April 9, 1947, Mountbatten Papers; Resolution of the working committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal, April 16, 1947, Mountbatten Papers; Kirpal Singh, *Partition of Punjab*, Patiala, 1972, p. 87.

50. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 260-87.

WOMEN, VIOLENCE AND THE PARTITION (1947)

Jasbir Singh*

The partition of the Punjab in 1947 was accompanied by an unprecedented communal frenzy which led to wide scale killing, looting, rape and molestations. The people of the Punjab had to pay a heavy price. The break-up of social and emotional fabric still remains telling in the minds of the Punjabis on the both sides of the Redcliffe line. This paper attempts to reflect upon the women's sufferings during 1947 so graphically portrayed in some of the English novels such as *Train to Pakistan*, *Azadi*, *Ashes and Petals* and *Ice-Candy Man*. These novels speak volumes about untold miseries of the women. Moreover, these literary representations, in a way, supplement and substantiate the historical discourse on the partition.

Urvashi Butalia has rightly observed that the historians have paid little attention to the experiences of women during the partition of the Punjab.¹ Further more, the feminist historiography emphasizes that a representative history can be written if the experiences and status of one half of humankind is an integral part of the story.² Moreover, in a civil war situation, women become a territory to be occupied.³

Much of terror and violence fell on the women-folk of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim families. Women became target of communal violence as early as March 1947, when a number of Sikh villages like Thamali, Thoa Khalsa, Doberan, Kallar in the Rawalpindi district experienced many cases of abduction and rape.⁴ The *Ajit* in April 1947, in a printed pamphlet narrated the plight of the women rather pathetically : "hundreds of women have been abducted, women jumped into wells and sacrificed their lives to preserve their honour".⁵ Women were frequently singled out especially for humiliating treatment at the hands of men of the rival community : molestation, rape, mutilation, abduction, forcible conversion, marriage and death were different facets of humiliation.⁶ There were other methods of

* Lecturer, DAV College, Amritsar, (PB).

1. Urvashi Butalia, "Voices of Women", *Indian Review of Books*, Vol. V, No. II, 1996, pp. 4-5.
2. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries : Women in India's Partition*, Kali For Women, New Delhi, 1998, p. 10.
3. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will : Men, Women & Rape*, Toronto, 1975, Ch.V.
4. Narinder Iqbal Singh, *Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, G.N.D. University, Amritsar, 2002, pp. 211-12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
6. Andrew J. Major, "The Chief Sufferers: Abduction of Women during the Partition of the Punjab", *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities : North India and Independence*, (eds.. D.A. Low and H. Brasted), Sage, New Delhi, 1998, p. 57.

humiliation such as breasts and noses were cut off, their bodies branded or tattooed with signs and symbols of the 'other religion', pregnant were forcibly aborted and often women were made to strip naked and paraded through the streets in towns and cities.⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru in his letter dated 4 April 1947, to Sir Evan Jenkins stressed the question of rescuing women who have been abducted or forcibly converted.... He further said that nothing adds to popular passions more than stories of women and so long as these women are not rescued, trouble will simmer and might blaze out.⁸

Leonard Mosley considers that about one lakh girls were kidnapped on both sides, forcibly converted and sold on auction blocks.⁹ Zia-ul-Islam states that in the Eastern Punjab nearly 55,000 Muslim women were abducted.¹⁰ However, the Indian Government considered 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women abducted in Pakistan. Pakistan estimates provide the figure of 50,000 Muslim women abducted in India. Gopalaswami Aiyangar, who led the Indian team to the Inter-Dominion Conference, called these "rather wild figures."¹¹ Between 6 December 1947 and 27 April 1948, nearly 3,912 non-Muslim women and children were recovered from the West Punjab and 7425 Muslim women from the East Punjab. By 30th September 1957, the number of abducted women and children recovered from Pakistan stood at 10,007 and from India at 25, 856.¹²

The young women were bartered and sold like a cheap chattel. Sometimes, it was impossible to trace their whereabouts. They bore children often only to have taken them away forcibly. Sometimes, families traded in their own women in exchange for freedom.¹³ Murders, abductions and conversions became common scare. No community lagged behind. Ethics and morals took the back seat. Criminalization of human instinct assumed prominence. For many a woman, it was not only 'miscreants', 'outsiders' or 'marauding mobs' that they needed to fear. Husbands, fathers, brothers and even sons turned killers.¹⁴ They claimed that they did 'honour' killing. Their claims were to protect the purity and sanctity of their religion.¹⁵ Thousands of women were rejected by their husbands and families and they had no

7. Urvashi Butalia, "Community, State and Gender : On Women's Agency During Partition", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 17, April 24, 1993, WS-15.

8. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, pp. 43, 68.

9. Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj*, Jaico Publishing House, New Delhi, 1982, p. 281.

10. N.I. Singh, *The Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)*, p. 233.

11. *The Tribune*, 16 December, 1949.

12. Andrew J. Major, "The Chief Sufferers", *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities*, p. 65.

13. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence : Voices from the Partition of India*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1998, p. 132.

14. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, "Recovery, Rupture and Resistance : Indian State and Abduction of Women During Partition", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 17, April 24, 1993, WS-2.

15. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Border and Boundaries*, pp. 49-50.

option but to live out their lives in *ashrams* and brothels.¹⁶ During and in the aftermath, the patriarchal character determined the fate of women. Abducted women were 'recovered' and 'restored' despite their reluctance in certain cases.¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru appealed the people to take girls and women back and give them every help as they required tender and loving care.¹⁸

Women were 'the chief sufferers' of the chaos created by the partition. Facts and figures speak about the number of women who were abducted, raped, molested, forcibly converted or killed in the process. Thus, except fictional writings, no study has tried to address the physical or psychological scars left on women during this time. Since time immemorial women have always been used as a weakness of the rival, whether it is an individual, community or country. Rape of the women of the opposite party is used as a tool to maximize the fear and intimidation among the latter. Partition fiction has been a far richer source both because it provides popular and astringent commentary on the politics of partition and also because we find women's voices speaking for themselves.¹⁹

During the partition, women had to face a lot of sufferings i.e. abduction, rape, molestation and death. They were targeted for the sake of revenge by the rival community. Thus, the women, who had nothing to do with partition and politics, suffered the most because their only fault was that they belonged to the rival community. Abduction of the women became a common thing during the partition riots. Men of all communities had lost their morality. The abduction of women was interpreted as an act of revenge by them. Partition novels expose the devilish instinct and brutality with which the women were handled.

"They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet - that want to move backwards - are forced forward instead. Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child's screamless mouth. Her violet sari slips off her shoulders, and her breasts strain at her sari-blouse stretching the cloth so that white stitching at the seams shows. A sleeve tear under her arm. The men drag her in grotesque strides to the cart and their harsh hands, supporting her with careless intimacy, lift her into it. Four men stand pressed against her, propping her body upright, their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces".²⁰

16. M. Asaduddin, "India's Partition : Literary Narratives and Retrieval of History", *Encounter*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Jan.-Feb., 1999, p. 176.

17. Parkash Tandon, *Punjabi Century (1857-1947)*, Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1961, pp. 250-53.

18. N.I. Singh, *Communal Violence in the Punjab (1947)*, p. 236.

19. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, pp. 11-12.

20. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice Candy Man*, Penguin, New Delhi, 1988, p. 183.

Abduction of women had become very much prevalent in the turmoil of 1947 and so their worthlessness. Even the ordinary man did not lag behind to get his 'share'. Those who unable to get a wife were also in a race to get an abducted woman out of this chaos which is quite clear from the dialogue between Jugga and the Tonga driver :

"Bholeya, I hear a lot of women are being abducted and sold cheap. You could find a wife for yourself".

"Why Sardara, if you can find a Mussulmani without paying for her, am I impotent that I should have to buy an abducted woman," replied Bhola.²¹

Migration also simplified the task of the abductors. It was easy for them to take away the women while the convoys were on the move because the chances of resistance were less. Women could do nothing but wail only. Literature on the topic depicts dramatically the psychological wounds of women being separated from their families who were already uprooted. Women were taken away from the refugee trains and nobody was able to protect them from being abducted. They could hear only heart-piercing cries of the young girls and women :

"The agonizing cry of a young girl rent the air. *Hai Wahe Guru*, save me. She cried out in panic. Santa Singh was startled. For the first time, the full meaning of the scream hit him. The cry was far away, probably at the other end of the train, and yet so close that he dared not look in the direction of his own fourteen year old Baljeet.²²

Rape was the worst form of the women sufferings during the partition. The increasing incidents of rape and molestation reflected the psyche to expose the most protected aspect of the 'other' community's honour and self-respect. Rape was used as weapon to kill the rivals morally. What else can be worst for a woman to be exposed openly before the men.

"She had been married four days ago and both her arms were covered with red lacquer bangles and the henna on her palms was still a deep vermilion The mob made love to her. She did not have to take off any one of her bangles. They were all smashed as she lay in the road, being taken by one man and another and another. That should have brought her a lot of good luck".²³

Women were too much unfortunate to conceal 'themselves'. The hunting eyes were in search of the 'beauty to be ravished'. The men of the rival community had lost their sensibility and they had become lustful. Even

21. Khushwant Singh, *Train To Pakistan*, Ravi Dayal Publishers, New Delhi, 2001, p. 85 (First published in 1956).

22. H.S. Gill, *Ashes and Petals*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1978, p. 8.

23. Khushwant Singh, *Train to Pakistan*, p. 200.

the army and police officers deflowered the women for being the rival community.

"He heard Sunanda again; Let go of me, Let me go, you brute. It seemed someone's hand was on her mouth, for her words come out in muffled gasps..... She was lying on the ground on an improvised bed of hay, in the far corner. Her head was away from Arun and he saw her legs. Between her legs and on top of her, was lying a man..... She was still weeping - softly and tamely. Her breath was choked with convulsion."²⁴

Women were not spared after being raped. Partition novels and stories draw the picture how the women were molested and their bodies badly mutilated. Their ravishers found a false fascination in torturing the women after destroying their chastity.

"A lone muslim dragged a woman away, and kept her for his own exclusive use..... The rest were subjected to mass rape, at times in public places and in the presence of large gatherings. The rape was followed by other atrocities, chopping off the breasts and even death. Many of the pregnant women had their wombs torn open. The survivors were retained for repeated rapes and humiliations."²⁵

Refugee trains also came with the mutilated bodies of the women :

"A train from Gurdaspur has just come' he announces, panting, 'everyone in it is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslims. There are no young women among the dead! Only two gunny-baggs full of women's breasts!'"²⁶

Another horrible aspect of the women sufferings during the partition was their being paraded naked. It reflected that how all human values and morality came to an end under the influence of communal hatred. Women who were considered a symbol of decency and chastity were being openly molested. They were confined to household and were not supposed to expose their faces to the strangers but during the partition riots they were totally exposed to the mobs with lustful eyes. The women had to lost their most worthy thing i.e. their privacy and chastity for the crime they had not committed. The abducted women who were left-overs, were paraded naked in the form of processions which presented the picture of 'open dance of vulgarity.'

"The procession arrived. There were forty women, marching two abreast. Their ages varied from sixteen to thirty, although, to add to the grotesqueness of the display, there were two

24. Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*, A.H. Publishers, n.p. 1978, pp. 306-307. (First published in 1975).

25. Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*, p. 293.

26. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice Candy Man*, p. 149.

women, marching right at the end of the column, who must have been over sixty. They were all stark naked. Their heads were completely shaven; so were their armpits. So were their pubic regions. Shorn of their body hair and clothes, they looked like baby girls, or like the bald embryos one sees preserved in methylated spirit. Only the breasts and hips gave away the age. The women walked awkwardly, looking only at the ground. They were all crying, their eyes shed no tears..... The bruises on their bodies showed they had been beaten and manhandled..... The procession moved through the bazaar, and along with procession moved a river of obscenities - foul abuses, crude personal gestures, spurts of sputum, odd articles like small coins, faded flowers, cigarette butts and bidis that were thrown at the women. As soon as the women came near, that section of crowd became hysterical, 'Rape them'. 'Put it inside of them'. 'The filthy Hindu bitches'. 'The *Kafir* women'. Some said worse things".²⁷

Forceful marriages during the partition upheaval was another dimension of the women sufferings. The women were forced to live with a person whom they didn't like. In certain cases, after being raped or molested, women had to accept their ravishers as their husbands.

"Affected at least by Godmother's stony silence, Ice-Candy man lowers his eyes. His voice divested of oratory, he says, 'I am her slave, Baijee. I worship her. She can come to no harm with me'. 'No harm?' Godmother asks in a deceptively cool voice - and arching her back like a scorpion its tail. She closes in for kill. 'You permit her to be raped by butchers, drunks and *goondas* and say she has come to no harm?' 'Is that why you had her lifted off - let hundreds of eyes probe her - so that you could marry her?

..... 'You have permitted your wife to be disgraced! Destroyed her modesty! Lived off her woman-hood'.

'I s-saved her', he stammers. They would have killed her..... I married her."²⁸

One the one hand those unfortunate women had to bear the torture of being separated from their families and on the other hand they had to live a forced life. They were nothing more than 'caged birds'.

"And Ayah raises her eyes to me. Where have the radiance and animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever : wide opened with what they've seen and felt; colder than the ice that lurks behind the

27. Chaman Nahai, *Azadi*, pp. 296, 297.

28. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice Candy Man*, pp. 248, 249.

hazel in ice-candy man's beguiling eyes".²⁹

Although in numerous cases the women had surrendered before their 'fate' but generally they had a vague hope of being recovered and reunion with their families.

"But the illusion is dispelled the moment she opens her eyes not timorously like a bride but frenziedly, starkly - and says : 'I want to go to my family.' Her voice is harsh, gruff: as if someone has mutilated her vocal cords.....

'I will not live with him.' Again that coarse. Rasping whisper.

.... 'What if your family won't take you back?' She asks

'whether they want me or not, I will go.'³⁰

Partition literature portrays the tragedy of break-up of the families by the abductions of women. Children were deprived of their mothers. Thus the people moved with broken inner selves and loneliness.

"I wonder about the women's children - Don't they miss their mothers. I pray that their husbands and families will take them back. Hamida seldom mentions her children. All I've been able to get out of her is that she has two teenage sons and two daughters, one as old as me and one younger."³¹

It was quite tragic fact that abducted women were not accepted by their families - because they had been molested by the rivals. These novels depict a situation where their own people turned away their faces from those fate - smitten women. They were ravished by the 'strangers' but left away by their relatives.

"Don't you miss your children?"

I ask.

"Of course", says Hamida.

"Then why don't you go to see them?"

"Their father won't like it".

"They must miss you. You could see them secretly, couldn't you?"

"No". Says Hamida turning her face away. 'They are better off as they are. If their father gets to know I've met them he will get angry and the children will suffer'.³²

Death was inflicted upon women sometimes by the men of rival community or sometimes by their own men. The parents were more concerned about the sex prospectus than their lives. Thus, to save their honour and dignity, people killed their daughters and sisters by their own

29. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice Candy Man*, p. 260.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 262.

31. Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice Candy man*, p. 221.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

hands. What would be the state of a mind of a man where he was going to kill a person whom he had loved and brought up. Thus, women not only suffered at the hands of the outsiders but also at the hands of their own menfolk.

"Santa Singh had the option of seeing with his own eyes the cries, the sobs and utter vilification of his blood. Or he could end, with one stroke of his sword, all the miseries that now quite clearly awaited his grand daughter. The hammering off the door now rose to a deafening crescendo, and there was no time to lose. Santa Singh raised his rifle to his shoulders, faced his grand daughter squarely for the last time, took careful aim so that the end would be instantaneous and sobbing, "Baljeet forgive me. Oh *Nanka* forgive me", pressed the trigger. The shot made one deafening roar, as if of protest, and then accomplished its preordained task. While Santa Singh was thus spending himself in all his fury, in other parts of the train the same ghoulish scene was being repeated by others in a similar predicament. Most used sharp edged *Kirpans*, but some not having these, just throttled the girls to death. One wondered what a lawyer would have said if he had been present. Who would be the real murderers? The insane parents or the mob? Or the circumstances?....."³³

Despite remorse, reconciliation as suggestive remedy appears in the novels. Lala Kanshi Ram, the central character in *Azadi* refers to two scenes in which naked women are paraded. His own daughter Madhu had met the same fate. Yet he confesses :

"We are equally guilty. Each one of those girls in that procession was someone's Madhu."³⁴

Thus, women being considered representatives of respective communities, had to undergo inhuman treatment at the hands of 'others' and their 'own'. Men were either perpetrators or silent spectators. Literature has portrayed women's predicament and agony graphically.

33. H.S. Gill, *Ashes and Petals*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1978, p. 9.

34. Chaman Nahal, *Azadi*, p. 339.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COLONIAL LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION IN KANGRA DISTRICT

*B.L. Mehta**

During the Colonial rule Kangra district comprised of the area of 9,978 square miles lying between latitude 31° 20' and 32° 58' in the north and longitude 75° 39' and 78° 35' in the east.¹ This vast tract was stretched eastwards from the plain country of Bari and Jullundhar Doabs, over the Himalayan ranges to the boundary of Tibet. It was bounded on the north-east by the Great Himalayan ranges, which formed the valley of upper Indus and separated the district from the Tibetan region of Rupshu and the territories of the Chinese empire; on the south-east by the hill states of Bushahr, Mandi and Bilaspur; on the south-west by the Chakki torrent which divided it from the hill portion of the Gurdaspur district and by the native state of Chamba.² Three of the Punjab rivers— the Beas, the Ravi and the Chenab take their rise within this tract. The district was divided into two divisions. The first division comprised of Kangra proper which is situated in lower hills. The second division consisted of a wild mountainous regions which included Kullu, Lahaul and Spiti.

British Administered areas of present day Himachal Pradesh, came under direct British control after the Anglo-Gorkha war of 1846. Agriculture and agro-pastoralism were mainstay of economic life in the region and people continued to depend entirely on the resources derived from land. Cultivable land was scarce in the hilly terrain, and the best of it was possessed by rulers and a few feudal lords. Land revenue paid by cultivators of these small patches of land was perhaps the single largest source of income of most of princely states that once dominated the region. In addition to this, the rulers of the hill states were forced to supplement their income with non-agricultural activities, which included petty trade, pastoralism and the exploitation of forest wealth. After assuming direct control over the area under study, the British made a land revenue settlement in order to extract more revenue from the peasants.

The settlement procedures adopted by the British in this territory that came to be organized as Kangra District were fashioned on their earlier experiences in other parts of Northern India and especially in the plain

* Reader, Deptt. Of History, ICDEOL, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla-5.

1. *Kangra District Gazetteers, 1924-25*, First published, 1926, rpt. Dharamshala, 1995, p.

1.

2. *Ibid.*

region of Punjab state.³ As a result of the introduction of the colonial revenue settlement, the structure of rural society in the area underwent changes. This came about primarily through periodic alterations brought about in the revenue administration and method of settlement in different parts of the region. The first regular settlement of Kangra district was carried out in 1850. As a result fundamental changes were brought about in the economic relations between various social classes. The basic objective behind the introduction of the land revenue settlement seems to be the transformation of agrarian relations in such a way as to serve the economic and political interests of British rule. This paper attempts to trace the social change brought about by colonial land revenue settlements made in areas directly administered by the British.

To fully understand the nature of change ushered in during the British period, it is important to describe briefly the system of land revenue administration that existed in the hill region prior to British rule. However, much of our understanding of the pre-colonial system is derived from British sources in the absence of adequate indigenous information. The land revenue system as pursued by the earlier rulers was based on the age old concept that the state was entitled to a share of the produce of the soil, and that the cultivator had a hereditary right to cultivate his piece of land as long as he paid regularly and punctually the customary rent imposed by the ruler. Under this system the rulers were regarded the owners of their entire principality.⁴ The wastelands, great or small belonged to them, unless they remitted it as an act of favour to the holder or assigned it in *jagir* to a third party in lieu of pay or as subsistence allowance. Similarly the grazing fees due from the owner of each herd or flock were payable to the Rajas.⁵ These were rarely, or never, assigned to any *jagirdar*. Every several interest in land, whether to cultivate certain fields, to graze exclusively certain plots of waste, work at a water-mill, set a net to catch game or hawks or to put a fish weir in the stream, was held direct from the Raja as a separate holding or tenancy. The incumbent or tenant at the most called his interest a *warisi* or inheritance, not a *maliki* or lordship.⁶

For revenue purposes, the Raja seems to have divided the country into large villages or circuits, each of which had numerous officials appointed by the Raja who were paid direct from his granary or treasury. There were revenue agents or managers called by various names such as *Chaudhris*, *Kardars*, *Hakim*, *Amin* or *Palsara* and an accountant called *Kait* or *Likniara*, *Kotiala* or keeper of the granary. In Mahal Mori in Hamirpur

3. B.H. Baden Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. II, First published 1882, rpt. Delhi, 1990 (3 Vols), p. 539.

4. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Kangra District, 1904, Lahore, 1906, p. 23.

5. J.B. Lyall, *The Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of Kangra District, 1875*, Lahore, 1889, p. 26.

6. *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Kangra District, 1904, p. 192.

there were *Mehrs of Tappas* who seem to be military commanders of the local militia. In Kutlehr and Jaswan, besides the officer of *Tappa*, each hamlet had its own headman who was called *Muqaddam*.⁷

Prior to the settlements made in colonial times, the Rajas used to collect revenue through a diversity of methods. In unirrigated tracts, the commonest way was to assess the actual produce at each harvest and then collect the Raja's share in kind, or more commonly to convert this share into cash at rates somewhat above than the prevailing current price. The Raja claimed his share at half of the produce on good land, two-fifth, a third or even fourth on other inferior types of lands. The Raja's share was called *sat* or *hakmi hissa* (ruler's share) whereas that of the cultivator was in some places called *karat*.

The System of landholding and the associated terminology also varied. In Kothis Kodh and Sowar of taluqa Bhangal-covering some of the more mountainous parts lying to the north of taluqa Palam- the *hakimi* system of *jeolabandi*, or the division of the field into holdings known as *jeolas* prevailed. In the irrigated tracts, peculiar measures or forms of holding were to be found. In the irrigated parts of *taluka* Bhangal, the plots were called *bir* and were rated at so many *dharun*. A *dharun* was a measure of seed converted into a land measure according to the amount of seed required to sow a plot. In the eastern half of the Kangra Valley, that is, in *taluka* Palam and parts of Rajgiri, the fields were grouped into *hal* or ploughs.⁸ A collection of fields, for the most part in a ring fence, was rated as one *hal* or sometimes as two *hals* or half a *hal*. However, in the western half of the valley, that is, in *taluka* Santa and Rihlu, the fields were divided into plots, rated as one or more *ghumao*. A *hal* was in all probability the amount of land, which could be tilled with one plough, and a *ghumao* was a regular measure like an acre. In *talukas* Indaura and Khairan, of pargana Nurpur, the only other tract in which there was much irrigation, no field assessment existed and the revenue was collected by share.⁹ Each of the plots of irrigated land, whether termed *hal*, *ghumao* or *dharun* had a separate method of assessment. Everywhere, in irrigated as well as unirrigated lands, some extra cesses as a percentage of rent on produce were levied on each holding. Some of these cesses went to the officials and most of it to the Raja's treasury. Some of the commonest cesses were the *jinsal* or army tax, the *paundh* or war tax, the watchman's cesses, the Kanungo's cesses etc.¹⁰

During the reign of Akbar (1556-1605), the states located in this region became tributaries of the Mughal empire for the first time. The fact

7. *Gazetteer of the Kangra District*, Part-I, 1883-84, Lahore, 1885, p. 212.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

9. *Ibid.*

10. J.B. Lyall, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1875, p. 33

that the area of Kangra was granted in *jagir* to Birbal in 1573¹¹ by Akbar, encourages us to believe that it might have come under some kind of preliminary revenue settlement shortly thereafter. This assessment formed basis or at least influenced the revenue system of the Kangra.

After the Mughals, Kangra came under the centralized Sikh rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1809.¹² The Sikh land revenue system was akin to Mughals. *Batai* or crop sharing, of the produced prevailed till 1823 and was collected in kind. *Kankut* or appraising the standing crops, was introduced in 1823. From 1834, the government started encouraging farming out of the revenue of large areas of irrigable lands to highest bidders for period varying from 3 to 6 years.¹³ "The Sikh rule in the hills", according to Hasrat, "differed somewhat in details if not in general pattern of administration."¹⁴ Under Ranjit Singh, all small chiefs were absorbed, made proprietary holders of villages and came to be regarded as *jagirdars* entitled to a share of the revenue.¹⁵ The states of Chamba, Mandi and Suket on the other hand were subjected to heavy tribute, without making them the part of the Sikh state. Under his rule, first, Desa Singh Majithia and after him his son Lehna Singh held charge in the capacity of *nazim* or governor of the hill territory between the rivers Ravi and Satluj.¹⁶ Neither of them, however, resided permanently in the district. They carried on the administration through agents called *kardars* appointed at the pargana land. The *kardar* was to act as the fiscal as well as judicial officer. His main function was to collect revenue and his duty was to provide for the cultivation of land. There was no fixed scale of salary for the remuneration of these officers. In certain parganas, the *kardar* paid a fixed annual revenue to the *nazim* and retained the surplus themselves. In most cases, however, they received a personal salary of Rs. 700 to 1000 a year from the state.¹⁷ In the discharge of their duties, *kardars* were assisted by an accountant, a writer and twenty to thirty sepoys. For their maintenance an additional cess was levied on each village under their jurisdictions.

The Sikh *nazims* did not alter the land revenue assessment and state's share. In Kullu valley they continued the old custom of dividing the

11. H. Beveridge (tr.), *Akbarnama*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1979, (3 Vols.), p. 528.

12. In 1908, Kangra was annexed by Ranjit Singh. Many of the dependencies of Sansar Chand in the Kangra hills were also annexed to the Kingdom of Lahore. Already in 1809 several of these had become tributary to Ranjit Singh. These included Jaswan, Nurpur, Datarpur, Kutlehr, Guler and Siba, see Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 43.

13. For detailed study of Land Revenue System of the Sikhs, see Indu Banga, *Agrarian System of the Sikhs*, pp. 88-117.

14. Bikram Hasrat, *Life and Time of Ranjit Singh : A Saga of Benevolent Despotism*, Hoshiarpur, 1977, p. 55.

15. B.H. Baden Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. I, First Published 1882, rept., Delhi, 1990 (3 Volumes), p. 194.

16. *Gazetteer of the Kangra District*, Part-I, 1883-84, p.218.

17. G.C. Barnes, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1854, pp. 28-33.

crop with the cultivators, whereas in inner Saraj valley and in unirrigated tracts the land revenue continued to be assessed in terms of money rent in the part, this was called *Ain*.

Besides the land revenue the *kardar* levied *banwaziri* cesses and *anna* in the rupee as *kharch* or contingencies. This was not repaid to the village officials, but appropriated partly carried to his own expenses and partly to the government credit. Under Sikh rule, the collections were always made in advance of the harvest. The spring demand commenced in *Navratra* which usually fell in the month of March. The autumn revenue was realized in September and frequently remitted to the *nazim* by *Dussehra* festival or the end of October. Remissions were occasionally given under the authority of *nazim*.¹⁸ There was no uniform system and no general name by which all headmen of villages were known.

No doubt, the land revenue system was much altered under Sikh rule, but according to J.B. Lyall, the Sikhs considerably confused the old system of administration, and the *kardars* in the process of implementation converted the system into the instrument of squeezing as much money out of the country as possible.¹⁹ G. Barnes did not seem to be very critical of Sikh rule in hills, but he sees the problem lying the office of the *kardar*. The main defect of this office was that neither the salary nor the term of office was fixed. Furthermore, the *kardar* misused his office, as there was no check on him. Barnes opined that the state's share was heavy. It was based upon half of the gross produce and this proportion was frequently exceeded by the imposition of other cesses. The mode of collection in advance of harvest put a strain on the resources of the cultivator. Barnes, however, spoke highly of Lehna Singh, the *nazim*. He has described him as a mild and lenient governor. His assessment was moderate for a native system and although he did not possess that force of character to keep his agents under proper control.²⁰

British policy with regard to the British administered area was similar to that followed by the Mughals and later by the Sikhs. The policy differed with regard to the semi-mountainous hill states of the Kangra group of states and more mountainous hill states of the inner Himalaya. The Mughals had established direct rule over the Kangra group of states except Nurpur which remained autonomous for a long time and the rest of hill states were left entirely free in the management of internal affairs. On the cession of these states to the British by the Sikhs in March 1846, John Lawrence, the Commissioner of the Jalandhar Doab, conducted a summary settlement for three years.²¹ Four parganas, Kangra, Haripur, nadaun and Kullu were

18. *Ibid.*

19. J.B. Lyall, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1875, pp. 26-52.

20. G.C. Barnes, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1854, p.49

21. *Gazetteer of the Kangra District*, Part-I, 1883-84, p. 221.

settled by the Commissioner in charge of the district. Generally, the summary settlement was assessed at the reduction of 10 percent on the Sikh revenue. All anomalous cesses and official prerequisites were kept away, and the demand consolidated into a definite sum, for which engagements were taken from the village representatives for a period of three years. In 1849, with the formation of Kangra district, G.C. Barnes undertook the first regular settlement for the region that was completed in 1850. The settlement, apart from recording the rights of different classes of people on the land and the assessment of land revenue introduced a set of new officials in the revenue administration. It created an administrative unit *pargana* which coincided roughly with the territory of the areas of old principalities. British appointed a *tehsildar*, who with the help of an official establishment, kept the accounts of the whole district and decided cases relating to the land. A *kanungo* was also appointed at the level of *pargana*, rather than at the *taluka* level. It was thought that due to the simplicity of the tenure in the hill states, the *kanungo* at the *taluka* level would be superfluous. Below the *pargana* were minor divisions called *talukas*, which was of medieval origin. Below the *talukas* were the *tappas* and *mauzas*, also known by the name of *Mugdai* in Nurpur. The petty hamlets constituted the most elementary unit of the whole of the system which was equivalent to the village of the plains.²²

Among the hereditary officers, *chaudharies* were created by the Mughals. They were functionaries found in the region of the proper Kangra, which had come under direct Mughal rule. The extent of their jurisdiction was seldom more than eight to ten villages. In every *taluka*, there were several *chaudharies* and their duties were chiefly fiscal, to provide security of government revenue. Their emoluments were usually 2 percent of the gross produce, and sometimes the government in lieu of their service conferred upon them small *jagirs*. The *kotwals* were another grade of hereditary officers; it too was a post of the Hindu Land Revenue System. The *kotwals* were agricultural chiefs of *talukas* with fiscal, criminal and military functions. They were granted rent-free land. The village headman was an important functionary at the village level. In former times, he had to collect revenue and keep the accounts. He was generally a humble farmer who belonged to the most influential family in the village or hamlet. All these functionaries were paid by a fixed proportion, five per cent because of their collections. As an alternative, the British also created the office of *patwari* or village accountant, who kept accounts and elaborate record of land. He was paid 2 percent to 3 percent on the revenue collected. He was generally in charge of two or three contiguous villages.²³

After the annexation of Kullu by the British in 1846, a summary settlement was made for three years. By this settlement once again the old

22. G.C. Barnes, *Settlement of Kangra District*, 1854, p. 16.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 17

revenue units prevalent during the time of hill rulers, were enforced. Each *waziri* was sub-divided in *kothis* and each *kothi* was further subdivided into *phatti*. The word *kothi*, however, came to be designated as a circuit of villages. The boundaries of these circuits were somewhat vague and in the waste they were often indistinct owing to indifference with which the property in the wasteland was regarded prior to British rule.²⁴

Moreover, *graon*, or *gaon* was not in these hills synonymous with the *mauza* as in the plains. The *phatti* was composed of a number of *graons* and its primary significance as a division of the people of *kothi*, it also took no account of the waste land. And similarly the *kothi* as an aggregate of two or more *phattis* comprised a large number of hamlets was a sub-division effected with regard only to the cultivated land and its produce.²⁵ All the landholders of the *kothi* became jointly responsible for the payment of its revenue, although the revenue was distributed by the British officials over *phattis*, hamlets and individual holdings.

This system was adhered to at the revision of the settlement of 1871, and also at the revision of assessment in 1891, although at the latter it was found more convenient, owing to the large size of *kothis* and to their including dissimilar tracts, to frame separately the new assessment of each *phattis*. By this step, however, the joint responsibility of the landowner of the *kothi* was not affected.²⁶

For the Kullu *pargana*, which also constituted Lahaul and Spiti, different type of administrative units and officials were created. Below the *pargana*, the *kothi* constituted the next fiscal unit. For the *kothi* a headman called *negi* was appointed. He was an old hereditary official. He was made responsible for the collection of revenue and carrying out orders. Under him, two or more deputies were appointed, one for each *Phatti* or two or more *Phattis*. The deputies were given the title of *lambardar*. However, their position and duties were rather those of *Seok* and *Panjauli*. The duty of *Panjauli* was to collect milk, curd etc. for the royal kitchen, whereas *seok* managed and distributed *begar* or forced labour.²⁷ The *negis* and *lambardars* were paid out of the five percent of the revenue, which the government allowed to the village headman, the larger share of three-fifths as a rule went to *negi*. Village watchman and messengers were also appointed for each *kothi* under the name of *karauk* and paid by a cess on grain leviable on each house. Some years later, in 1862-63, *rakhas* or forest watchmen were appointed by the government in each *kothi* and their pay

24. *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, Vol. XXXA, Kullu, Lahaul and Spiti, 1917, Lahore, 1918, p. 144.

25. *Report on the Administration of Punjab and its dependencies for 1918-19*, Lahore, 1920, p. 33.

26. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XIV, Faridabad, rept. 1908, p. 30.

27. J.B. Lyall, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1875, p. 80.

arranged for the same way.²⁸

Thus, in the creation of the revenue administrative structure, the British had to respond to the two different types of village communities as well as the revenue administrative structure that had evolved from the antiquity. In fact, the British could only make partial adjustments in the administrative structure that had evolved differently in the semi-mountainous areas of the Kangra group of states and the mountainous hill areas of Kullu and Lahaul-Spiti. They only added a few more functionaries to make the administration more meaningful for the type of changes they had visualized.

While describing the nature of the pre-colonial hill states, the British regarded each principality as a single estate. By exaggerating the power of the feudal chiefs and allocating these powers to themselves, the British were able to bring about the desired changes in the agrarian structure and the rights and interests and privileges of the various agrarian classes. The Raja was declared the sole proprietor and the fountainhead of all rights in the soil within his principality. All subjects were his servants and held their land in obligation of military and other services.²⁹ By allocating the powers to itself, the government recognized certain rights in private individuals and only retained such rights for itself as were necessary. The power to make this distribution was based on *de-facto* power of the government to dispose of all lands. Consequently, the following four features of the disposition of landed rights followed from it.

1. The government used its own eminent claim as a starting point from which to recognize or confer definite titles in the land in favour of persons or communities, which it deemed entitled.

2. It retained the unquestionable right of the state to all waste lands and at the same time recognizing all possible rights of both property and user rights that might exist in such lands. By this right, they were able to lease or sell these lands to cultivators or to the capitalists for special treatment, i.e. for the cultivation of commercial and plantation crops, such as tea, potatoes, wheat etc. and for establishing control over the forests, which then became state forests.

3. It retained the right to escheat and of course, to dispose of estates forfeited for crime and rebellion.

4. It reserved the right necessary for the security of its income ; of regarding all land as in the manner hypothecated as security for the land revenue. This hypothecation necessarily implied or included a right of sale of the revenue arrears.³⁰

28. *Ibid.*

29. J.Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*. Vol. I, Lahore, 1933, rept, Shimla, 1982, p. 86.

30. B.H. Baden Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. I, pp. 234-35.

In the Kangra region of the district, the alienated *jagirs* consisted mainly of political *jagirs* and religious endowments. There was also land leased for life services, military or otherwise and small patches of village service land to artisans known as *lahri basi*. The percentage of the alienated lands not paying revenue to the states amounted to 25 percent of the entire land.³¹ The political *jagirs* were entirely held by the descendents or connections of the Hindu rulers of the country. In the Kangra group of states prior to settlement, areas of 99,658 acres amounted to the revenue of Rs. 1,12,072 existed as political assignments in perpetuity as rent-free tenures in both money and territory. Similarly, the religious *jagirs* amounted to 7,299 acres worth of Rs. 9,036 of revenue. The other rent free tenures amounted to 67,525 acres worth Rs. 84,445 annually.³² In the period between 1846 and 1850 (during the settlement), land worth Rs. 68,104 were resumed by the state on account of escheat, which included the *jagir* of Mahal Mori belonging to the rebel chief Raja Pramod Chand which was alone valued at Rs. 33,000.³³

In most of the cases, the superior claims of the chiefs or big *jagirdars* as proprietors had already been disposed of by granting of allowances by the Sikhs and the smaller chiefs were absorbed and made proprietary holders of villages and came to be regarded as *jagirdars* entitled to a share of the revenue.³⁴ The *maufidars* or *jagirdars* assumed very nearly the position of property owners towards the cultivators on their grants. The Sikhs assumed all grants held both by the Rajputs and by the hereditary servants of the Raja, but generally allowed them to pay their revenue at somewhat favourable terms. At the regular settlement, person who had in this way been paying revenue was always held to have a better claim to the title as proprietors than the cultivators. In some cases, after the settlement, the *maufidars* who died and their grants lapsed; the heirs were always allowed to engage for the revenue. It was practice peculiar to the district.³⁵ Although the British wanted to settle directly with the actual cultivators, as it would yield greater fiscal benefits, in practice, certain intermediary rights came to assert their existence, which were duly recognized by the British rulers as a matter of political expediency. It was in this background that the settlement introduces the right to property in land. Therefore, the British made the cultivators proprietors, who were the holder of *warisi* or were holding the hereditary right to cultivated land allotted to him or his ancestors by the Raja himself, the virtual proprietors of their holdings.³⁶ This also led to alienation of land from the cultivating caste and its accumulation in the hands of non-cultivating caste.

31. G.C. Barnes, *Settlement Report of Kangra District*, p. 31.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

34. B.H. Baden Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. I, p. 194.

35. J.B. Lyall, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1875, p. 35.

36. G.C. Barnes, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1854, p. 66

The rise of population in the rural areas also led to the reduction of the size of holdings. This led to a steady increase of the small peasants. In Kangra at the time of the settlement of 1852, the average agricultural holding was less than four and nine tenth of an acre.³⁷ The general trend was for smaller holding to exist in irrigated valleys, making very high density of the population in these areas.³⁸ As the number of people in the serving caste grew, their bargaining position vis-à-vis the landowners tended to deteriorate so that they had to eke out their living by working as farm labours, tenants-at-will or migrate.

The land revenue was to be realized every year, irrespective of year's production. It had to be paid in good as well as bad harvest, whether more or less land was cultivated. There was no gradation in assessment; all big and small holdings had to pay the revenue at the same rate. This was done to induce the cultivators to more intensive and regular farming. Alongwith this, they also introduced commercial crops varieties such as potatoes and tea to induce farmers to take the production of exportable and more valuable crops.³⁹ Thus, the government policy was to improve the conditions of agriculture and cultivators to create a market for British manufactured goods.

At the time of the first regular settlement, the revenue assessment procedure was simplified. No detailed or classified system of village assessment was followed. In every *taluqa* two different rates, one for irrigated and other for unirrigated lands were fixed. Based on a general assessment, an approximate *jama* was prepared for each village; accordingly, the rate of revenue was raised or lowered.

The nature of landed property that was created after the first settlement, as per British understanding and the application of the western concepts and principles and experience of settlement in the North-West Provinces. Resulting in making the landholders or *khewatdars* of each *mauzas*, the proprietors of their several holdings of arable land and co-proprietors (in proportion to the land revenue paid by each) of the wastelands. On the other hand, the state was made the proprietor of forests and wild growing trees in the wasteland. Therefore, in the forests, dual rights simultaneously existed, one that of the state aimed at the preservation of the forests, and the other of the landholders or even the residents of the several villages to users right for fuel wood and timber for frame implements and house building as well as the grazing right of the *Gaddis* and *Gujjars* in such land.⁴⁰

37. A. Anderson, *Final Report of the Revised Settlement in Kangra Proper*, Lahore, 1897.

38. Chetan Singh, *Natural Premises Ecology and Peasant Life in Western Himalaya. 1800-1950*, Delhi, 1998, p. 60.

39. G.C. Barnes, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1854, p. 28.

40. *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, Part-I, 1883-84, p. 112.

In the plains and semi hill tracts of Kangra district waste belonged to the village communities whereas in the hill areas the unenclosed waste was the property of state, subject to certain common rights of users, belonging by customs to communities and individuals. The landowners had only rights to small portion of enclosed waste among the fields for which they were jointly and severally responsible for the payment of revenue.

In the case of lands of the non-cultivating castes such as Brahmins, Rajputs and Mahajans, who had either through their power or their position in bureaucracy got land leased in their favour, were able to persuade the men, who had no land, to work on their fields. They were generally men from the lower castes or artisans, who had either been rendered unemployed by the influx of the manufactured industrial goods into the village or to the increase in their population, and the small piece of their *lahri basi* land. Because of the settlement, a number of different categories of tenant farmers emerged between the *kamas* (farm servants) and the regular tenant farmers (*opahu*).⁴¹

Because of British policy, the lesser tenures of the tenants and even of the *basiku opahu*, a regular tenant, who was in cultivation for generations on the land of some revenue-collecting intermediary, became insecure. Under the policy almost all the lesser tenants were reduced to tenants-at-will who could be evicted without any legal protection. Even in the case of regular tenants, it became very difficult for the tenants even under tenancy act of 1868 and 1887 to claim their right as occupants.

Another important tenure found mainly in Kangra proper was the *adhi sali* or *sanjhi* tenure. It generally arose from a free act of a person in full possession as proprietor.⁴² It arose from two different premises. In one case the proprietor who could not cultivate himself, for whatever reason, got a tenant to settle down on other terms, but shared it on one-half basis. In another case, a proprietor may be able to cultivate, but found difficulty in paying the revenue and bribed the landholders to help him by admitting him in partnership. Since the *adhi sali*, tenure arose out of the contract the *sanjhi* in either case was entitled to an occupancy right.

In a nutshell the land revenue policies of the British including the introduction of the regular settlement could, however, at best help in maintaining the records of the landed rights and did nothing for the poor peasants. The land revenue as settled through the various settlement operations, was a definite improvement over the earlier system. Thus by introducing the uniform system of land revenue evaluation vis-à-vis rationalization of the assessment of land revenue the British not only reduced the land revenue to a great extent but also made its administration

41. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

42. J.B. Lyall, *Kangra Settlement Report*, 1875, pp. 30-31; see also Chetan Singh, *Natural Premises*, p. 96.

and collection more effective. The land revenue was to be realized every year irrespective of year's production. However, this system worked against the interest of peasants because the crop failures were a frequent occurrence in this region. In the process of setting the land revenue the British introduced the concepts of private property and switched over to the mode of payment of revenue in terms of money as opposed to earlier co-existence of the commodity as well as monetary modes of payment. Both these factors along with the precise determination of the land revenue demand in a way introduced certain new contents, which in their own logic and process encouraged the money lenders and the system of mortgage or the alienation of land. The British also clearly defined the ownership of waste and forest land. In the plains and semi-hill tracts of Kangra district where the village communities were strong, much of the land was allotted to individual owners, but village wastelands were declared common property of the whole body of the proprietors. In the hill areas the unenclosed waste was the property of state subject to certain common rights of users, belonging by traditions to communities and individuals. No doubt, the British abolished many of the old cesses but in their place they also levied many new ones. Thus there was a marginal difference in their incidence.

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT: RESPONSE OF STUDENTS IN PUNJAB

Harmeem*

The Nation's Tribune, the Indian National Congress, sounded the bugle of war on British Imperialism on 14 July, 1942 and asked the people to be ready to sacrifice everything for the nation. It was the last mass movement of Indian Freedom Struggle and Mahatma Gandhi exhorted students with his non-violent revolutionary call. Punjabi students played an important role during all the phases of freedom movement and gave full response to Gandhi's call.

Here is a mantra, a short one that I give you. You may imprint on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. Mantra is *do or die*, we shall either free India or die in the attempt.¹

The challenge before the Punjabi students was that Punjab was divided into six political parties [Congress, Congress Socialist, Communist, Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and Akali Dal] most of them not only remained aloof from and indifferent to Congress exertions for the overthrow of foreign rule but influenced the student community also.

On 8 August, 1942 the famous Quit India resolution was passed in Bombay. Government decided to nip the trouble in the bud and on August 9, 1942 Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and 250 other Congress leaders² were arrested and movement took revolutionary turn. On 11 August All India Congress Committee issued 12 point programme, which included 'Peaceful' *hartals*, manufacture of salt, Non-payment of land revenue etc. An appeal was made to all classes of population: workers, students, clerical staff, retail dealers, industrialists and others to participate in the struggle.

In the Province Congress leaders, Gopi Chand Bhargava, Bhim Sen Sachar,³ Iftikhar-ud-din, Lala Achint Ram, Giani Gurmukh Singh Musaffir, Isher Singh Majhail, Niranjan Singh Talib, Lala Duni Chand, Lala Virendra, Lala Chhabil Das, Lala Pindi Das were arrested under the defence of India rules.⁴ On August 10, 1942 Congress was declared unlawful, its offices were sealed. In Lahore the office of the Servant of the People Society, Bradlaugh

* Research Scholar, Department of History, Punjabi University, Patiala.

1. Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma*, Vol.VI, 1940-45, Bombay, 1953, pp.199-200.

2. Chopra, P.N., (ed.), *Quit India Movement*, British Secret Documents, New Delhi, 1986, p.32.

3. Mukherjee, H.N., *India's Struggle for Freedom*, Calcutta, 1962, p.242.

4. *The Tribune*, August 10, 1942.

Hall and Lajpat Rai Bhawan, the Committee Room were also sealed. These institutions were devoted to educational and social upliftment of the society. The police established a post at the Lajpat Rai Bhawan and guarded the whole area.⁵ Demonstrations and *hartals* took place almost in all the districts of the Punjab. The most affected districts were Lahore, Amritsar, Lyallpur, Ludhiana and Jullundhar.

In the meantime printing of bulletins in Urdu, Gurmukhi and English had been organized by the Congress and separate arrangements had been made for propaganda amongst students, Sikhs and Muslims.⁶ The leadership passed into the hands of small Congressmen and students who left the schools and colleges in large numbers to fight the battle for freedom.

New revolutionary character in the slogans kindled the fire in Punjabi youth during this period. Innumerable pamphlets and posters were secretly printed and circulated. To the traditional slogans like '*Long Live Revolution*', '*Victory to Gandhiji*', '*Victory to Mother India*', '*Long Live free India*' were added with new ones like we shall '*Do or Die*', '*Quit India*'.⁷ Ram Manohar Lohia and Jai Prakash Narain issued pamphlets, '*Freedom Struggle Front*'⁸ & '*To all fighters for freedom*' respectively, to coordinate and intensify the student movement.

Schools and colleges became the meeting places. In Lahore the students of S.D.College, D.A.V.College, Dayal Singh College and Sikh National College were influenced by the Congress Socialist Party and the students of these colleges remained more or less continuously on strike upto the end of September, 1942 as a mark of protest against the arrest of Congress leaders.⁹ The students of these colleges passed resolutions supporting the Congress demand for independence and protesting against the arrest of Congress leaders and demanding their release immediately and unconditionally and the establishment of National Government in the country.¹⁰

In Amritsar the Hindu College and the Khalsa College were opened on September 23, 1942 but they were again closed on September 29 as students of these colleges went on strike. The authorities of the colleges in Lahore and Amritsar threatened to take strong action against the agitating students but the *hartal* continued.¹¹ In Amritsar girl students were given a highly objectionable treatment but they proved beyond doubt that they could compete with the other provinces and sacrifice their best interests for the cause of the nation.¹²

5. *The Tribune*, September 17, 1942.

6. Home Department Political, F.No.3/52/1943.

7. Prasad, Amba, *The Indian Revolt of 1942*, Delhi, 1958, p.61.

8. Home Department Political, F.No.3/83/42.

9. Home Department Political, F.No.18/9/42.

10. *The Tribune*, September 22 & 23, 1942.

11. Home Department Political, F.No.18/9/42.

12. *Student*, June 1943, Bombay.

In Khalsa College the Akalis, Congress, Socialists and the Forward Block of the students joined hands and gave the call for general strike.¹³ Although Akali leaders were divided into two groups but they were united in passing a resolution on August 27, 1942 condemning the arrest of Congress leaders. In Lyallpur some honest Sikh students under Akali influence led the students of Government College in a campaign of defiance of bans, meeting and demonstration.¹⁴ The President of the Students' Union, Lyallpur addressed a public meeting on September 17, 1942 and he was immediately arrested and sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment. Avinash, secretary of the Ludhiana students' union, Kak Bhagwat, ex-president of the students' union and Amolak Ram, a student of the Arya Medical School Ludhiana along with other six students were arrested on September 21, 1942.¹⁵ In Gurgaon protest meetings and processions in which students took part were subjected to indiscriminate and ruthless lathi charge.¹⁶

It was in the city of Lahore that on 10 Nov., 1942, 104 students were arrested, including 22 girls. At the police station they were asked several questions as follows:

1. What is your name?
-Bagi No.1,2,3.....
2. What is your father's name?
-Gandhi Ji
3. What is your mother's name?
-Bharat Mata.¹⁷

During the period of strike, the students' meetings were held almost daily in the grounds of the colleges and were accompanied by minor demonstrations. Students however confined the activities to strike in the premises of their own colleges or schools. The students' unrest was weak in the districts of Hoshiarpur, Sialkot, Ferozpur and Gujranwala. Many student workers travelled from district to district in order to organize the student movement in the Punjab and some student workers came from other provinces also. These student workers distributed pamphlets at various educational centres.¹⁸

The Punjab Provincial Students' Conference was held at Ludhiana on February 8, 1943 where the following resolutions were passed: "In face of the Japanese attack against India, in face of the danger of world domination by fascism, the duty of Punjab youths can only take on form

13. Sahai Govind, *42 Rebellion*, Delhi, 1947, p.407.

14. *Student*, op.cit.

15. *The Tribune*, September 22, 1942.

16. Ralhan O.P., *Indian National Movement*, Vol.3, Delhi, 1994, p.389.

17. August Struggle Report, prepared under the aegis of All India Satyagrah Council U.P. branch (unpublished), AICC Library, New Delhi, quoted by Manmohan Kaur, p.217.

18. Home Department Political, F.No.18/9/42.

national unity for national defence and national government.¹⁹ Ataula Jahania, presided over the conference, Mrs. Perin Romesh Chandre, Gen. secy. of the AISF, who inaugurated the conference exhorted the students to work for unity as their best contribution towards national unity which would bring them a national government for national defence.²⁰

A new phase started with Gandhi's fast on February 10, 1943 to unite the people. On February 22, 1943 in connection with Gandhi's fast most of the students absented themselves from their classes in different local colleges and schools including the girls' institutions. Several meetings were held in different colleges and passed resolutions urging the Viceroy to release Mahatma Gandhi immediately and unconditionally, they also urged William Phillips [representative of U.S. government] to intervene in the interest of the United Nations. Nationalist Muslim students, girls of the Lahore College and the Khalsa College [for women] appealed to Jinnah²¹ also. Although Muslim students adopted very negative attitude towards the movement, at the same time there were nationalist Muslims also who supported the movement.

Fateh Chand College, D.A.V. College, B.D. Sohan Lal College and Khalsa College for Women observed fast on February 22, for the long life of Gandhiji.²² The Amritsar Students' Federation held about 40 street corner meetings in February, they started signature campaign in the city demanding Mahatma Gandhi's unconditional release and 500 signatures of Muslims and others were also secured by them.²³

Revolutionary Students of the province were under the influence of Jai Prakash Narayan, Som Prakash Saida, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Amar Kaur²⁴ (organised womens' training camp in Lahore and Amritsar), Usha Mehta and many more revolutionary leaders. The mentality of the militant and underground activities of these revolutionaries is well illustrated by a pamphlet the police unearthed at Nasik and also found later circulating in the Punjab entitled "A.B.C. of dislocation". It was to set forth an elaborate plan for the formation of a nation wide '*Guerilla Force*', to be called '*Azad Dastas*' (Free Bands) in evocation of the name of the Azad Hind Fauj (Free Indian National Army). Advancing through Burma the '*Azad Dastas*' were thought of as a supplement to the main part of the revolution of 1942 - an open revolution of the whole people.²⁵

Apart from student agitation the Punjab was free from any major

19. *The Tribune*, February 9, 1943.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.* February 23, 1943.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.* February 26, 1943.

24. Kaur, Manmohan, *Role of Women in the Freedom Movement*, Jullundhar, 1968, p. 220.

25. Home Department Political, F.No.18/9/42.

trouble. Large number of students participated in non-violent demonstrations. Schools in Lahore and Amritsar observed partial strikes. There were students' unrest in the districts of Hoshiarpur, Sialkot, Ferozpur and Gujranwala. But no serious incident took place during the student demonstrations and strikes in the various educational institutions.²⁶ Police revealed the existence of 'Embryonic Gangs' in the district of Lahore, Gujranwala, Sargodha and Rawalpindi which aimed at the acts of violence. The Government took strong measures and crushed these gangs.²⁷

At the same time the Quit India Movement was weakened by the attitude of Communist Party, Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and Akali Dal. All India Students' Federation (student wing of Communist party of India) actively helped the British war efforts after Russia had joined the allies for 'People's war'. According to Arun Shourie in 'The great betrayal'. The Communists abused every National leader but at the same time Sir T. Steward, Governor of Bihar also suspected (6 May 1942) 'that the communists were playing a double game, on the surface they were anti-fascist and pro-war, below the surface they were anti-imperial'.²⁸ The All India Students' Federation also appealed to the students to protest in an organized manner against the suppression of the Government and demanded the release of the Congress Leaders and establishment of National Government.²⁹

Punjab Muslim Students' Federation was founded in 1937. The students organized primary Muslim league branches and opened adult education centres and reading rooms in rural areas of the province where they propagated the idea of 'Pakistan' to the rural masses.³⁰ At the same time achievement of Pakistan had become the goal of the All India Muslim League since the passage of the Lahore resolution of 1940.

The Punjab Muslim Student's Federation directed the Muslim students to keep themselves aloof from the Congress Movement. In its Working Committee meeting held under the Presidentship of Hamid Nizam on May 29, 1942, federation passed the following resolution:

The Muslim students of the Punjab look upon the proposed Congress Civil Disobedience campaign as an open threat of aggression on the part of the Hindu Congress against the Indian Muslim nation with a view to establish Hindu Raj throughout India and further express their firm determination to oppose it under the leadership of Quaid-i-Azam.³¹

26. *Ibid.*

27. Home Department Political, F.No.3/34/42.

28. Chopra, P.N.(ed.), *Historic Judgement on Quit India Movement* (Justice Wickenden's Report) Delhi, 1989, p.13.

29. Home Department Political (1), F.No.6/15/42.

30. Mirza, Hussain Sarfaraz, *Punjab Muslim Students' Federation, 1937-47*, Islamabad, 1989, p.184.

31. *Ibid.*, p.185.

On August 14, 1942 the working committee of the Punjab Muslim Students' Federation expressed its concern and called on the Muslim youth not to be misled by Gandhi's policy of establishing Hindu Raj in India.³² On the other hand the Punjab Provincial Hindu Mahasabha followed the policy of the All India Hindu Mahasabha and kept itself aloof from the Congress movement. The Hindu Mahasabha called upon the Hindus to give "no support to Congress Movement" because it considered the Quit India Resolution a sin. It stated that the movement was "most untimely, muddled, self contradictory and ill fated." Hindu Student's Federation went on yelling *Hindu Students' Federation Zindabad!, Akhand Hindustan Zindabad! Pakistan Murdabad! Students' Federation Murdabad!*³³

At the same time *Azad Punjab Scheme* was elaborated in a meeting of Akali Dal which was held in June, 1943 under the Presidentship of Master Tara Singh. The primary purpose of this scheme was to protect the Sikhs from the existing Pakistan in the Province.³⁴

Besides, the opposition of political parties student workers of Quit India Movement faced Government atrocities also. Government used suppression measures indiscriminately, arrests, flogging and objectionable behaviour with girl students were general punishments. Most stringent measure was the arrest of Congress Leaders and Nationalists on the very first day Government proclaimed the whole Congress unlawful.

There were arrests of students who after being trampled, kicked and foully abused were taken into a room, made to lie on their backs, with a plain clothed man sitting on their chest, their feet were lifted up by another man and they were beaten on the sole of their bare feet with canes. They were compelled to touch the boots of the police officer with their nose. School boys between the ages of 11 and 14 years were beaten naked before their friends and were tied to a *tik-tiki* and then flogged and many of them bled.³⁵ Police in Multan pushed some students into a pond. As a result three of them were drowned. Government forces began to shoot people, used tear gas in all parts of the country to disperse the gatherings. In order to alienate the students from the movement, the Punjab Education Code was amended for the imposition of penalty of expulsion or rustication of a college student for one year however the students were asked to abstain from taking part in any demonstration and the like, otherwise they would be debarred from taking examinations and black listed for government appointments.³⁶

Although students of different political parties saw the Congress movement from their own angle and perspective but the contribution of Nationalist students of Punjab did not go waste. Quit India Movement raised

32. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

33. *Student*, August, 1943.

34. *The Tribune*, March 1st, 1943.

35. Vidyarthi, R.S., *British Savagery in India*, Agra, 1946, pp. 273-75.

36. Home Department Political, F.No. 13/9/42.

the question of Indian independence and gave it worldwide attention. 'Young United Nations' an International Student Assembly, representing students from 50 countries with 400 delegates met in Washington on September 1, 1942 and adopted unanimously the following resolution which said :

On basis of National coalition government in India, we urge that negotiations be reopened at once between great Britain and Indian people towards the granting of political freedom, so as to mobilize the Indian people for an all out war effort alongside of the United Nations.³⁷

37. *New York Times*, September 6, 1942, cited in Amba Prasad.

CLASS CONFLICT AND CHANGE : A PROFILE OF A PUNJABI VILLAGE

*Ahmad Salim**

While speeding on the first-ever motorway from Islamabad to Lahore, you may pull over for a while at Miana Gondal just a couple of miles away from Salam interchange. It is a small village, doing its best to catch up with the mechanized world. Earlier on, it was a part of Tehsil Phalia in District Gujrat. But now it is mapped out in tehsil Malakwal of District Mandi Bahauddin in accordance with the new geographical division.

Miana Gondal is an age-old village of the interior Punjab. However, it can no longer be termed as Marx's purely classical village because it has lost its self-sufficiency and has gotten close enough to the city by exploiting the latest marvels of science. Though the story of its urbanization stretches over two decades only, it has shaken its stillness and calmness, which had always been a typical feature of the classical village. In the early part of the nineteenth century, a dispensary, a post office and a primary school for boys were established. After the inception of Pakistan, the boys' school was upgraded to the middle level and a primary school for girls was built. By now, the girls and boys both pass their matriculation there. Recently, an intermediate college for boys has also been approved for Miana Gondal, but it has not been established yet. Perhaps because the influential residents of the nearby village Bosal have tactfully gotten the same college approved for their village. However, all these facilities are specific for the children of landlords, worthy shop-owners and the well-off Khwaja families. The educational opportunities for the lower strata, especially the Muslim Sheikhs known as Musallis, is very poor.

Geographically, Miana Gondal is situated in the suburbs of Mandi Bahauddin and is adjacent on one side to Phularwan and Bhalwal, which are towns of Sargodha District. The other side is linked with Tehsil Pind Dadan Khan of District Jhelum. The village is a 73-mile drive from Gujrat, 40 miles from Sargodha, and 143 miles from Lahore, the capital of Punjab. Despite its distance from the major cities, the village has developed a civic air. After the completion of the motorway, it is about a two-and-a-half hour drive to get to either Lahore or Islamabad. All the modern technology and equipment considered to be the hallmark of a city is visible in Miana Gondal. You will find transistor radios, tape recorders, television sets, dish antennas, telephones and all the most sophisticated agricultural tools and

* Post Box 2342, Islamabad, Pakistan.

equipment. However, these things have only given the residents a tinge of materialism, shallow social status and frustration.

Things have changed now. Television programs have replaced the tradition of puppet shows in the landlord's house. People are the same but professions also have changed. The new generation of weavers is preparing sweets or selling vegetables. This was my village.

The boys and girls with whom I spent my childhood by playing various sports around the village now laugh at my "conservative" approach and feelings. I might be too romantic about the past, but I really felt quite sad to see all the good traditions of my village being dashed to the ground. Now, there is only a blind race for money. Money, mosquitoes and houseflies are equally increasing just as the filthy ponds and heaps of garbage are mounting day-by-day.

Not too long ago, it was only a limited upper class of the landlords or Khwaja families who exploited the villagers. But now another class of rising shopkeepers has also joined hands with the exploiters to take everything from the lower class. During the last couple of years, many new and modern houses have been constructed. These houses are especially comfortable because they have flush toilets and a supply of water. However, despite all that, nobody has ever thought of changing the negative and ailing attitudes toward the lower classes.

No doubt, the new inventions have upgraded the system and standard of life in Miana Gondal but only to the consternation of the lower class. Their fate is still the same but they are changing their professions in an effort to join the ongoing material race. The traditional baker Oldma Phattein's (Fatima's) common mud oven is no longer in working condition and the people do not gather there to get their breads baked. Gone with the tradition is the dialogue about the socio-domestic development of the village among the villagers. But Oldma's third generation is sweating and burning their blood more than ever before. Likewise, Uncle Yousaf, Oldma's older son, is exerting even more than usual just to keep his body and soul together. On the other hand, his younger brother, Nazir, who had always been proud of his dandy horse and Tonga, now looks for new openings, such as selling ice.

In a corner of the village lives a group of the degraded outcast called *Musallis* (Muslim sweepers) in disparaging conditions. These *Musallis* once used to clean and carry the household garbage from the houses of the Khwajas and other families for a petty wage of 10 rupees a month. After 1980, their plight has turned from bad to worse. Brick-kiln owners exploit the *Musallis*. Nobody is there to feel sympathy for them and do something humane for them. Instead, they are verbally insulted and degraded.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, half a century before my

birth, the Khwajas introduced materialism to this village.

The first house, my grandfather Mian Fazal Karim bought in Miana Gondal is situated in front of the small graveyard and market of the village. At one side of the house live the *miyanas* (religious/spiritual leaders) and on the back reside the blacksmiths whose oldest member, Uncle Ghulam, is a living history of the village. Another senior member, Muhammad Yousaf of the same clan, recently died of cancer; he was not provided adequate treatment at the Shaukat Khanum Hospital. However, Muhammad Yasin, Shafiq, and their children of the third generation still talk about their past links with our family in an earnest way but the same is not warmly reciprocated by the members of our family. Now, nearly all of my grandfather's family has shifted from the village to Lahore, Islamabad and Mandi Bahauddin and they have broken their ties with the village. During my childhood, it was puzzling how the men in our family could go to the blacksmiths' houses and talk to their women, but their male members were neither allowed to enter into our houses nor talk to our women. They came to our house only when there were no women in sight. Due to their lower class position, this is no longer a puzzle for me now.

It was from the same Uncle Ghulam that I learned a quarter of a century ago that my grandfather migrated from Pind Dadan Khan in District Jhelum to this village. In those days, Muslims were setting up small-scale shops in competition with the Hindu shopkeepers. So, my grandfather was also among the pioneers of Muslim trade. Uncle Ghulam is the appropriate narrator for this transitional period because it is directly concerned with the trade sources and tactics, which replaced the barter system, by money exchange. This also caused the trade of *Musallis*, initially in our houses, but later on by big landlords and contractors of brick-kilns.

Uncle Ghulam reminisced:

Your grandfather, you know, Mian Fazal Karim, came to Miana Gondal and said, 'I have to set up a shop here.' The linen and muslin was not in vogue here then. There used to be cloth, weaved in looms. There was no system of yards or meters. Instead cloth was measured by hands; four to six hands of cloth were enough for a skirt.

The same cloth was usually colored black for turbans. Mian Fazal Karim opened a shop here and introduced linen and muslin. He opened his shop first in the place where the goldsmith Sattar sits. The small-side measurement of this cloth was never accurate enough and nobody knew how much of it would be sufficient for a shirt and a turban. Hayyat Dhabba's (tailor) father, viz., Muhammad, used to stitch clothes at that time. People normally went to consult him regarding the exact

length of cloth required for their purpose. However, it was a constant source of confusion for them. Your grandfather, one day, went to Miani (District Sargodha) and fetched a tailor, Imam Din, for his shop. This lowered the importance of Muhammad.

Uncle Ghulam also shared a long story of the differences between the local and outside tailors. The local tailors stitched clothes in exchange for goods whereas the immigrant tailor charged money for introducing modern fashions in stitching. So my grandfather's cloth shop hit the looms hard and his modern tailor successfully introduced the money-trade for novel designs. Likewise, it uprooted the old forms of production. The modern culture introduced by my grandfather flourished rapidly. But just as the old colonialism was pushed back by American imperialism, this new trend and development also slipped away from the clutches of our second generation.

First, the agricultural land saw its doom and then the in-house division turned the houses and shops into insignificantly small units. This socio-economic dislocation occurred during my childhood. I still remember the men and women coming to our home for washing clothes, sweeping, carrying garbage away, cutting woods and fetching water for the house. Their payment was our few old and used clothes. They were hired to do one task but were exploited and ended up doing other petty chores. Their trivial and nominal wages were fixed but the sphere or nature of the job was unlimited. For example, Bahishtan Musallan was paid just five rupees a month and eventually got a five-rupee raise per house for sweeping and taking out the garbage for our family and other Khwaja families.

The seeds of the exploitative system sown by my grandfather had by then started blossoming. Currency was in common use. First, the silver coins and later on paper rupees started showing their magic. This had great charm for the Musallis. I remember that I used to refer to Bahishtan, the Musalli woman who swept our home, as a "Phuphi" (paternal aunt). We belonged to the upper-middle class and had emigrated from a bigger town. We had manners and courtesies. We knew that we could get them to carry our garbage at the cost of just two rupees if the ironical weapon of respect is also used. We felt they were low but we gave them patronizing care. This is how all the civilized people treat their pet dogs.

Those days, there were only 10 to 12 families of the Khwajas in Miana Gondal. So the net wages of Bahishtan were never more than 40 or 50 rupees. At times, they received more if guests in the house were generous to them. Whenever my paternal aunts visited us, they gave a family of servants some money to show appreciation for their services and faithfulness as well as a mark of patronage in our honour.

I was different than the rest of my family. After passing my primary-standard examination, I left my native place and went a couple of hundred kilometers away for further education, the first rebellion of its kind in the family. Distant from home, I stayed with a close relative and experienced the hardships of a practical life. I realized the atrocities of imperialistic capitalism on the lower ranks of my village as well as elsewhere. I could empathize with the Musallis. I thought about the chronic cruelties enforced on these servants. I remembered the many times my friends and cousins used the female servants on the roofs, porches, basements and even lavatories to satisfy their sexual urge. It was a well-established belief of the town's "gentlemen" that these "cheap" servants are meant to please and serve in every possible way.

I recall getting in a fight with my elder brothers about this issue when I visited my village once in 1985. I cried out "A Musalli also has self-respect. She is a human being too. Like us, they are also created by God". But I was a fool to them. Once, I even told my brother "not to talk nonsense" while giving a lecture about Musallis. This was considered an act of blasphemy on my part. Ironically, a Musalli youth criticized me for talking rudely to my elder brother. Slavery had virtually permeated to the slaves and their captors.

Our elders did not disapprove of the youngster's sexual misconduct but winked at them as well. The only solution to such moral lapses, they believed, was to get to their young ones married. But a chain of marriages failed to stop the practice. Even after marriage, these youngsters continued practicing their "special rights." It was fascinating for them to be members of the nobility and take advantage of the less privileged. The worst part was that the wrongdoer was never accused of this immoral act; the victim was blamed.

I met with Bahishtan in 1982 and she shared her story. The earliest recollections of Bahishtan were that her ancestors immigrated from Thakur Waryam to Mian Gondal. Here, they saved money by being thrifty, purchased a plot and erected a small mud house where she lived until her death. She was about 80 when she died. Her death in late 1980's marked the end of this house as her family moved to differed parts. Her youngest son, Mutalli, is now living in a single-room house. Bahishtan's fourth generation has also grown up. Her house, like the other Musallis' homes, was situated in the farthest end of the village to mark caste differences. She could not remember the exact price of the plot, but mentioned that it cost her 200 rupees to erect two separate houses - single-room and one of them was made of kiln and bricks.

Bahishtan devoted all her life to the service of Khwajas. However, in the changing scenario, the Khwajas either built new houses or left the

village. Bahishtan became jobless. Her sons then began looking for work. The eldest son, Sardara, started working at a brick-kiln, marking the beginning of a new kind of slavery in which a man puts himself on sale along with his wife and children. Her second son, Karam Ali, also joined a kiln. The contractors were putting the labourers through unspeakable tasks. Bahishtan said:

First, they lend some money, which is repaid in the form of monthly deduction from the salary. As a result, we sell ourselves for years to come. The irony of the situation is that the women and children also become their possession. As long as the loan is not paid back, we are their slaves round the clock. It is the same with all the kilns. Just look at the cruelty! They pay only 20 to 22 rupees at the most for a thousand bricks. Half of the amount is deducted out of the total wages as an installment of the loan and the other half we get for our needs. If this was all, we could have accepted this with some satisfaction. But they cheat us in accounts. If they deal fairly, the whole amount of the loan could be repaid within a few months but contractors keep on increasing the advance amount in a technical way such that we became their permanent slaves. This business is at its zenith in Haripur, Azad Kashmir, Jhelum, and Rawalpindi. The contractors are extorting money. This is why every contractor has three to four kilns. They pay us 1,000 rupees but note it as 2,000 rupees. So we fail to purchase our freedom even after the season is over. We are in debt to them more than before even after paying them back more than the due amount in the form of deductions from our wages. As a result, we are bound to stay their slaves even after the season is over and there is no labour for us. We cannot go anywhere to work and earn our bread. Prisoners are never choosers. We remain their prisoners along with our children, sisters and brothers. At times, men go to the other kilns for labour but their women and children stay back as prisoners of the previous kiln. This is the most terrible state of affairs.

Now, for example, sardara has gone for work at another kiln, leaving his wife and children behind. He will have some amount in advance from the contractor of that kiln in order to liberate his wife and kids from the first one and become a slave of his second master. This is such a heinous cycle of slavery that we cannot liberate ourselves from.

The Musalli women of Miana Gondal have now nearly given up

household drudgery. They accompany their men to the kilns, as this is one of the conditions of the contractors of the brick-kilns. They insist on the company of women, obviously to prepare food for their men. The women cook and work along with men in making dies for bricks and other jobs. Bahishtan mentioned that conditions for women are tough. "Since my son, Mutalli, is a bachelor, where could he get a wife from to work with him at the kiln? So, his sister has to accompany him now." The contractors exploit the honour of a Musalli woman and sexually abused them. Girls cry helplessly. There is no bigger curse and helplessness than being a defaulter of the contractor of some kiln.

Nearly blind, Bahishtan narrated:

The plight of our family is very desperate. Sardara is licking the feet of another contractor to get his wife and children free from the old one. This is starvation for us. We have really become helpless and degraded. There is not even a single penny for us. We have already borrowed a great deal of flour, pulses and vegetables. Although we deserve about 10,000 rupees as our wages for three seasons, the contractors instead have put a claim of around 18,000 to 25,000 rupees on us. We have even tried to bribe the contractor and his scribe by presenting gifts to their families but all in vain. So, we don't see mercy from any side but the skies.

Karmalli and his sister, Sardaran, took action. They sued the contractor in court but they got the run-around from one court to another between Sargodha and Lahore for the entire decade of 1980s.

Bahishtan continued:

We don't sell ourselves to the contractors alone. Rather, there is another class, which yearns for and loves to suck our blood and that is the class of landlords. What actually happens is that a Musalli borrows some money from the landlord and starts doing all the petty jobs for him. This landlord is no different from the contractor in his approach. He neither pays the affixed amount of a hundred rupees a month nor frees his Musalli salves. Instead, he is keen on making monthly deductions continuously. It is again the Musalli who suffers most from the mutual rivalries of the landlords. Like the contractors, the landlords also don't spare the honour of the Musalli women. It is very hard for a Musalli woman to keep her chastity. Currently, there are about a hundred houses where Musallis live in Miana Gondal but their area looks deserted. This is because they are either living with the landlords or the contractors.

The story of Bahishtan's sufferings does not end here. The landlord

also uses them in his various crimes and rivalries as bait. He fires his guns by placing it on their shoulders. Most of the acts of murder and theft are not done by the Musallis at their free will. They simply cannot disobey any order of their master. The landlords commit the crime and the report is entered against the Musallis. At times, they die so for the landlords' protection.

It was the unanimous voice of my village that the Musallis were born borrowers and spendthrift. Everybody told me one or the other tale to prove that they were spendthrift and, therefore, never going to recover from their debts. The villagers believe the Musallis have been living as slaves generation after generation due to their extravagant spending.

It was in March 1998 when I went to Miana Gondal again and a couple of new streets and houses had been erected near the Musallis' locality. The habitat of Musallis, the centuries-old pond adjacent to it, and the surrounding fields had disappeared. That habitat had become a story of the past in view of the new houses. While wandering through those streets, I found remnants of a few Musallis' houses. The house of Bahishtan had vanished altogether. However, in a single-room, shabby home, I met her youngest son, Mutalli, who told me that the kiln-owners themselves had left Karmalli and his family at Gujrat after some time.

Now Karmalli is looking after the cattle of the landlord, Shana. Normally, 200 to 400 rupees a month is the salary for this type of job. As Shana has only two or three animals, so Karmalli is being paid 300 rupees a month. The other brother, Sardara, works at a brick-kiln in Bhalwal along with his family. Before that, he served in a hospital. His sons work in Karachi.

The Miana Gondal Musalli settlement is deserted because, Mutalli said, most of the people have gone to the kilns for labour, so their houses are locked up. They will return on June 30 every year. There was also an elder Musalli, known by the name of Mirza, whose one son, Bashir, works at a veterinary hospital in the nearby town of Bar Musa. The second son looks after the cattle of the *maliks* whereas the third son works at a brick-kiln in Mirpur. Their work schedule at the kilns is disciplined and regular. They go to work at the kilns in the beginning of February and return to their homes by June 30. After a period of one month or six weeks, they get back to work when the rainy season is over.

If the rainy season stretches a little longer than usual, they are deprived of their wages for that period. So they need to borrow more money in case there is an extended rainy season. At times, the owners continue their work, which saves the Musallis from the seasonal loss.

A worker at the kiln, known as a molder, has a strange system of paying back the loan. If he were in debt for 10,000 rupees, half of his

monthly wages would be deducted as a premium of his payback. Naturally, it is very hard for him to make both ends meet with the rest of the salary. He, therefore, borrows more money. At times, the owners and their scribes increase the borrowed amount in the register. The scribe usually cheats the molders when counting bricks. They count and write 400 to 450 instead of the actual 500 bricks, depriving the molder of his rightful earnings. However, the advantage of working at a kiln is that wages are based on quantity of bricks, so if the worker takes a day off, he can make up for it by working harder on another day. But if you work for a landlord, especially at his husbandry, the worker is busy all the time. Labourers are expected to feed the animals even as late as midnight and get up with the break of dawn.

Mutalli mentioned that his job at the hospital was precarious as he was appointed in the time of Benazir and now present government aims at dismissing all such appointees.

Bahishtan's son Mutalli and his brothers do not respect their sister Sardaran because they feel she has dishonoured the family. When I reminded them that she had worked and suffered for her brothers, Mutalli said:

There was no need for all that on her part. We would have certainly repaid her one day. Now she has been licking dust somewhere in Lahore. Neither we know anything about her, nor are interested to know. Her daughter must also have grown up by now. Karmalli has three sons and a daughter who are all married. Sardara has four sons. From our mother's side, we also have two stepbrothers, viz. Sohbat and Salabti who reside near the mosque of the Musallis.

The Musallis have their own separate mosque. It was made of mud, proof that it belonged to the poor. Now they have spent a lot to beautify and furnish it. One of the Khwaja family members claims that the landlords have renovated the mosque but the Musallis refute this claim. Karmalli confirmed it: "This is our mosque and we have spent on it." The interesting thing about it is that its religious head is a barber who leads the prayers and teaches the children. Boys and girls can get upto a third class education here.

According to Mutalli, education for both boys and girls has been upgraded upto matric in Miana Gondal. The girls' school is located in the street of the Samors (a local caste) and the main school for boys is situated near the village police station.

The essence of Mutalli's conversation was that Musallis have lost their identity of caste and profession. From the house of Khwajas began their fall. Then they fell prey to the cruelties and inhuman treatment of the landlords and owners of brick-kilns. Their habitat has been deserted. What is symbolic of their life is that the stove in their homes is lit for only two months out of the year. Their children have no permanent place to live. They

are deprived of education, health and even self-respect.

But the houses of Khwajas have disappeared from Miana Gondal. My family, descendants of Mian Fazil Karim, is slowly leaving the village. Two of his noble sons, who were my uncles, have passed away. His third son, Khwaja Muhammad Sharif, was my father and he died in November 1999. My father and brothers lived in Lahore. My other relatives live in to Mandi Bahauddin, Bhera and Dubai. The family home built by my grandfather is rapidly turning into ruins.

Ghulam, 100 years old, is the only survivor to describe the class and its conflict. When I met him in April 1998, he started his story with the same old sentence: "Your grandfather, you see, when he came to Miana Gondal...."

The real story I have depicted through these pages requests a detailed study and analysis. The landlords and owners of the kilns are reaping the benefit of the money-crop sown by my grandfather. The new generation of the Khwajas, mostly settled in towns, continues to exploit the common man and their race for wealth with the other rich and corrupt families. The seriousness of the situation calls for immediate attention from the government as well as the non-governmental organizations.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are worth noting:

- The affairs of landlords and kiln-owners must be thoroughly probed into.
- The Musallis must immediately be liberated from the slavery of the Dark Age.
- They should have the protection of the labour laws. For example, eight hours of work a day and enough wages to lead an ordinary life without selling their wives, sisters, daughters and sons.
- Sexual exploitation of their women must be eliminated with implementation of criminal law.
- Since the Musallis have been living as slaves for so many years, they have paid their debts with hard labour so they should be absolved of the current debts. Bonded Labour is illegal and must be eliminated.
- Beside the government, it is an obligation of the workers' trade unions, journalists and social welfare organizations to reveal the facts in this matter and to help the Musallis obtain respectable work that will pay for their daily needs.
- Civil society should focus on this crisis. An investigation of how bonded labour started and its current status is necessary.

Oral Interviews:

1. Ghulam Lohar, Miana Gondal.
2. (Late) Bahishta Musallan.
3. Sardaran Musallan.
4. Sardar Musalli.
5. Karmalli Musalli.
6. Mutalli Musalli.
7. (Late) Khawaja Muhammad Sharif, Lahore.
8. Khawaja Muhammad Yusaf S/o Khawaja Fazal Ahmad, Miana Gondal.

THE AKALI-BJP COALITION : BASES AND WORKING IN THE PUNJAB DURING 1997-2002

Jamshid Ali Khan*

After the break down of Congress monopoly in the fourth general elections of 1967 in nearly half of the Indian states, the formation of coalition ministries have become a routine affair in the Indian states. However, the formation of coalition ministries in Punjab are not new to the state. The history of the formation of coalition ministries in Punjab can be traced back to pre-independence days. Both the elected governments formed in Punjab before independence of the country (1937-47) were coalition ministries. In 1937 Punjab Assembly Elections, though the Unionist Party had got an absolute majority,¹ but in order to have a broad based government in the state it opted for the formation of a coalition ministry comprising of Khalsa National Party and the National Progressive Party.² After this, in the Punjab Assembly Elections held in January 1946, no party could get absolute majority.³ In this situation of uncertainty, the Unionist Party, the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) formed a coalition ministry under the leadership of Khizar Hayat Khan (leader of Unionist Party) which lasted upto March 1947.⁴ When it submitted its resignation due to deteriorating law and order situation in the state.

As a matter of fact, the formation of coalition ministries in the state has been the result of its social composition. The social composition of Punjab indicates that its society has always been pluralistic, divided on the issues of language, religion, caste, economic status and so on. Such a

* Reader in Political Science, Department of Correspondence Courses, Punjabi University, Patiala.

1. The Unionist Party secured 102 seats out of total 175 seats in the Punjab Assembly and formed a coalition ministry under the leadership of its leader Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. For details see, Dalip Singh, *Dynamics of Punjab Politics*, Macmillan India Ltd., New Delhi, 1981, p.12.
2. The Khalsa National Party and the National Progressive Party secured 16 and 15 seats respectively in a house of 175 members. see, *Ibid*.
3. The party-wise position in the assembly after the elections was as follows: Muslim League = 74 seats, Congress = 51 seats, Shiromani Akali Dal = 23 seats, Unionist Party = 21 seats, Anglo-Indians = 2 seats, Independent Labour = 2 seats, Independent Christian and Independent Harijans one seat respectively. For more details see, K.C. Gulati, *The Akalis: Past and Present*, Ashajanak Publications, New Delhi, 1974, p.113.
4. For detailed study of the working of this ministry, see Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, Uncommon Books, New Delhi, 1996, p.226.

diversified society, as Neumann rightly points out,⁵ usually gives rise to multi-party system. And this system in turn opens field for the formation of coalition ministries. From this perspective, we may say that the very demography of Punjab is coalitional in nature. In other words, it may also be said that coalitions are inherent in the nature of society in Punjab. Before 1967, this inherent need of the society was filled by Congress, which in itself is a coalitional party (party of multiple interests) and since 1967 this need is being fulfilled sometime by the formation of non-Congress coalitions and sometime by the Congress governments.

Since reorganisation of Punjab on linguistic basis in November 1966, five coalition ministries have been formed in the state. The first coalition ministry known as United Front Ministry comprising of all the non-Congress parties and few independents was formed in the state under the leadership of justice Gurnam Singh on 8 March 1967 which lasted upto 24 November 1967. The second coalition ministry comprising of Akali Dal and Jana Sangh was formed again under the leadership of Gurnam Singh on 17 February, 1969 which lasted upto 27 March 1970. The third coalition ministry in the state was formed between Akali Dal and Jana Sangh under the leadership of Parkash Singh Badal on 27 March 1970, but Jana Sangh had withdrawn its support to the ministry on 30 June 1970. After the withdrawal of Jana Sangh support, the ministry survived as minority government with outside support of the Congress. The fourth coalition ministry in the state was formed by Akali Dal and the newly formed Janta Party under the leadership of Parkash Singh Badal (Akali leader) on 20 June 1977. Though this ministry lasted upto 17 February 1980 when President Rule was imposed in the state, but the Janta Party withdraw its support to the ministry on 19 August 1979. After the withdrawal of support by the Janta Party, the ministry functioned as a minority government for the remaining period. The fifth coalition ministry in the state was formed on 12 February 1997 by Akali Dal and BJP under the leadership of Parkash Singh Badal (Akali Dal). This coalition ministry lasted for full term of five years i.e. upto 26 February 2002. The present paper is an attempt to discuss the bases and working of Akali-BJP coalition ministry in Punjab.

Fresh elections to the Punjab Assembly were held on the 7th February 1997. In this election, the Congress was routed and could get only 14 seats out of total 117 seats in the State Assembly. The Akali Dal-BJP combine achieved an excellent victory. The Akali Dal won 75 seats out of 93 seats, it contested. The BJP secured 18 seats out of 22 seats it had contested. The Akali-BJP alliance combined together captured 93 seats out of total 117 seats in the Punjab Assembly.⁶ Though the Akali Dal was able to get

5. Sigmund Neumann, "Towards a comparative study of political systems" in Sigmund Neumann (Ed.), *Modern Political Parties*, Chicago, 1956, p.402.

6. For more details of 1997 Punjab Vidhan Sabha election results, see, J.A.Khan, *Punjab Di Rajniti* (Punjabi), Lokgeet Parkashan, Chandigarh, 2005, pp.26-56.

majority on its own, but as per party's commitment with the electorate, it proceeded to form a coalition ministry in the state. Thus, an Akali-BJP coalition ministry was formed in the state on 12th February, 1997 under the leadership of Parkash Singh Badal, who became Chief Minister of the state for third time. In the beginning, this ministry had ten Ministers out of which eight had affiliations with the SAD and the remaining two were aligned with the BJP. The Ministry was expanded thrice and consequent upon these expansions, the number of Ministers rose to 42 out of which only nine belonged to the BJP and the rest were Akalis.

The main bases of this coalition ministry were:

Anti-Congress spirit among the two alliance partners in the state served as an important basis for the formation of Akali-BJP coalition ministry in 1997. This spirit in Akali Dal and BJP was mainly due to the fact that each of them considered the Congress Party to be its main political rival. While the Akali Dal thought it to be its main political rival at the state level, the BJP considered it to be so at the national level. Therefore, to counter the Congress influence in Punjab and to keep it out of power, both the parties united to form coalition ministry.

The electoral benefits which they could draw from each other by forming some alliance also served as an important basis of this coalition. The Akali Dal thought that by the marginal support of the BJP's Hindu supporters, it would successfully challenge the Congress's Sikh candidates in the rural areas where the Akali Dal has its dominant strength. Likewise, the BJP felt that in urban or semi-urban constituencies (where it has areas of influence) the marginal Sikh votes of the Akali Dal would give it an edge over the Congress sponsored Hindu candidates. Infact, they began to realize that it was only through their alliance that they could keep the Congress out of power in the state. Moreover, the other factor which motivated the two parties to form coalition was that there was no possibilities of clash over the allotment of seats between the two parties in case they formed an electoral alliance. While the BJP being a party of the Hindus (who concentrated mostly in the cities), was interested in having Hindu dominated urban seats for contest, the Akali Dal, being a party of the Sikhs (who are largely concentrated in the rural areas) was interested in having Sikh-dominated rural seats for contest.

The termination of militancy in the state provided an important basis for the formation of Akali-BJP coalition ministry in Punjab in 1997. The militant movement in Punjab (1982-1993) had communalized the whole atmosphere of the state. In such an atmosphere, the Akali Dal and the BJP, which represented two diametrically opposite communities (i.e. the Sikhs and the Hindus) could hardly think of aligning with each other for the formation of an electoral alliance or the coalition government. However, once the militancy in the state came to an end and the communal dust settled

down, both the parties started coming closer to each other for the formation of electoral alliances. The termination of militancy ultimately paved way for the formation of Akali-BJP Coalition ministry in Punjab in 1997.

The Akali Dal fought February 1997 Punjab Assembly elections in alliance with the BJP. During election, the Akali Dal had declared that it would not form one party government of its own, even if it is able to secure majority of seats. This pre-election commitment of the Akali Dal with the people of Punjab provide basis for the formation of Akali-BJP coalition government in the state in 1997 even though the Akali Dal had majority of its own in the State Assembly.

It has been noted that the Akali leaders are not very enthusiastic to form one party government of Akali Dal even if they get a majority of seats in the Assembly either through election or otherwise. This attitude and approach is due to fact that the party lacks cohesiveness of internal structure and discipline. Because of the fear of split in the party at anytime, the leadership of Akali Dal genuinely feel that it cannot run the government for full tenure of five years even if it has got majority of seats in the Assembly. Thus, keeping this factor in mind, the Akali leadership formed coalition government with the help of BJP even though it had got majority in the assembly on its own. Therefore, it may be concluded that in order to provide stability to their ministers, the coalition is compulsion for the Akali Dal.

The Akali-BJP coalition ministry started functioning in a spirit of cordiality. BJP was given representation in the ministry in proportion to its strength in the Assembly. Since it was a government of the two political parties only, so the differences between the two were resolved by informal negotiations between the top leaders of both the parties, and the need to form Coordination Committee was not felt at all.⁷ The coalition ministry attempted to bring communal harmony in the state and started with the loudly trumpeted declaration of bringing honesty in the administration. The government launched a drive to weed out corruption from the administration and from public life. The CM announced that any person who reported a case of corruption against a government employee or a public man with some solid proof, would be given a cash award of Rs.50,000 if the information led to a conviction.⁸

The ministry performed well during the first year of its office. It won praise of the people for its decision to provide free electricity and water to the agriculture sector, abolition of house tax on residential premises and some other populist works. Soon after formation of the government, the Akali-BJP combine succeeded in winning the Kila Raipur Assembly seat in the bye-election held on May 29, 1997. In this bye-election, the Akali Dal

7. In all the previous coalition governments of Punjab such committees were formed to resolve inter-party conflicts. See, *Ibid.*, p.84.

8. See, *The Tribune*, February 15, 1997.

candidate Jagdish Singh Garcha supported by the BJP defeated the Congress- CPI and CPM combine candidate Tarsem Singh Jodhan by a very big margin of votes. The combine also swept the Lok Sabha Poll held on 16th February 1998. The SAD-BJP-BSM combined created a history by winning all the 13 Lok Sabha seats located in the state.⁹ The Congress suffered a humiliating defeat and drew blank in a repeat performance of 1977.

However, popularity graph of the coalition began to decline very speedily because of the developments which took place between 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha elections. First factionalism in the Akali Dal began to surface in the open when Prem Singh Lalpura, a Veteran Akali leader and MLA who was also elected to the Lok Sabha from Tarn Taran constituency refused to take oath as member of Lok Sabha in protest against the induction of Sukhbir Singh Badal (son of Parkash Singh Badal) in the Union Ministry. Lalpura preferred to continue as an MLA instead of joining the Lok Sabha. This infuriated the Akali High Command resulting in his expulsion from the party for six years.¹⁰ His expulsion further aggravated the crisis as a couple of other senior leaders from his area i.e. Majha region, objected to the increasing influence of the Kairon family which was related to Parkash Singh Badal. Expulsion of Lalpura from the party was the first crisis which the Akali-BJP ministry had to face.

Few months after the February 1998 Lok Sabha elections, the Adampur Assembly bye-election was held in the state on 25th November 1998. In this bye-election, the Akali-BJP alliance got a major setback when the Congress party's candidate Kanwaljit Singh Lalli won against the ruling alliance candidate Dalbir Singh Dhirowal by a margin of 6 votes. This defeat of SAD candidate had a demoralising effect on the Akali rank and file. Some Akali MLAs started demanding that the leader of the party should be changed. It was reported that Parkash Singh Badal's close relative and aspirant for the Chief Ministership Ravi Inder Singh started making serious efforts in this regard. He had made such an attempt earlier also, but had failed at the last moment.¹¹ Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra (president of SGPC) joined hands with Ravi Inder Singh. This seemed to have become a formidable grouping. Working committee of the SAD suspended Ravi Inder Singh from the party on 15 December, 1999 for his anti-party activities.¹² His suspension accelerated factional fights in the SAD. In this situation, Jathedar Tohra gave suggestion to Badal that he should hand over the Presidentship of the party to one of his reliable associates and himself concentrate upon

9. Bahujan Samaj Morcha (BSM) was formed in the state by Dalit leaders Satnam Singh Kainth in 1997.

10. See, *The Tribune*, November 29, 1998.

11. See, *Spokesman*, (Weekly), November 1999, p.9.

12. See, *The Tribune*, December 16, 1999.

the administrative side. Jathedar Tohra remarked: "Taking note of the dissatisfaction among the Akali workers, Badal the CM should appoint an acting President of the Akali Dal, who should be his confident. The acting President should look after day-to-day affairs of the Akali Dal, meet the Akali workers and satisfy them, while Badal should pay full attention to running the government."¹³ But violent reaction to Jathedar Tohra's statement and virulent against him had found much sought after scape goat for the defeat in Adampur. On December 11, just a day after Tohra made the statement, Badal called an emergency meeting of district Jathedars of the SAD. A serious note of Jathedar Tohra's statement was taken and it was considered an insult not only to the party President but to the functioning of Akali ministry.¹⁴

A Disciplinary Action Committee was revived with Jagdev Singh Talwandi as its Chairman and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Balwinder Singh Bhunder, Tota Singh and Gurdev Singh Badal as its members. The committee issued a show cause notice to Jathedar Tohra to reply within 15 days. Talwandi observed that Tohra has done an undesirable thing, the committee will decide about the action. But if he resigns, the matter ends there. Majority of the SGPC executives that is 10 out of 15 members allied with Badal asked for Jathedar Tohra's resignation. They passed a resolution of no confidence against him. They observed that they could not tolerate that SGPC be used for Tohra's personal interest. The body was created for higher objective.¹⁵

When Badal loyalists launched a well-orchestrated campaign against Jathedar Tohra, five Ministers owing alligence to the SGPC Chief resigned on 14 December, 1998, plunging the 22 month old Akali-BJP coalition ministry into its first major political crisis.¹⁶ However, before initiating action against Jathedar Tohra, Badal had ensured that he had the support of a majority in the 73 members Akali legislature party and 18 BJP MLAs and therefore faced no imminent threat.¹⁷

In a meeting of the general house of SGPC, majority of the members sided with Badal and passed a resolution to sack Tohra. The members observed that they were unhappy with his dictatorial style of functioning. They levelled a charge that he was spending funds as per his own wishes.¹⁸ The removal of Jathedar Tohra from Presidentship of SGPC generated a serious crisis in the Akali Dal. Akali leaders like Badal, Barnala, Dhindsa, Talwandi, Capt. Kanwaljit Singh and Sewa Singh Sekhwan get

13. For more details, see, *Ajit* (Punjabi daily), December 11, 1998.

14. See, *The Tribune*, December 12, 1998.

15. See, Surjit Singh Narang, Factionalised Akali Politics: Saliency of Ecclesiastical Dimension", *Punjab Journal of Politics*, Vol. XXIII, No.1, 1999, p.7.

16. See, *The Tribune*, December 15, 1998.

17. See, Ramesh Vinayak, "A SAD Affair", *India Today*, December 28, 1998, p.46.

18. See, *Spokesman* (English weekly), March 1999, p.21.

together in a meeting on 14 May, 1999 and expelled Jathedar Tohra from the party.¹⁹ After the removal of Jathedar Tohra from SGPC Presidentship, he formed a separate party known as Sarb Hind Shiromani Akali Dal. He declared that his party would fight for the restoration of the lost glory of Akal Takht and its Jathedar. The Akali-BJP governance suffered further as now it had to devote more time to checkmating Jathedar Tohra. The split in the Akali Dal had also its impact on the electoral performance of the party in 1999 Lok Sabha and 2002 Assembly elections. According to an assessment, the party lost about 23 Assembly seats in 1999 Lok Sabha elections due to this split.²⁰ It is also widely believed that had there been no split in the party, the Akali Dal could again form the government in Punjab by securing majority of seats in the February 2002 State Assembly elections.

Apart from the factional fights in the Akali Dal, the Akali Dal and BJP had also difference of opinion on certain issues. In April 1997, a controversy arose between the two parties on the issue of granting 'Sāropas' to the family members and relatives of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale, Harinder Singh Sandhu and Satwant Singh on the Baisakhi day in the presence of Captain Kanwaljit Singh, Finance Minister of Punjab. This development put the BJP in a thick soup when the other parties equated this development with the return of militancy in the state. Though the Akali leadership tried to defend its position by saying the Punjab government had nothing to do with the development and it was just a casual development which should be ignored as insignificant. Jathedar Tohra, President of SGPC tried to escape from the criticism of other parties by saying that honouring of Sikhs in Akal Takht was an internal matter of the Sikhs and others should not interfere in this matter.²¹

The BJP, however, took this development very seriously and raised the matter with Akali leadership on various forums. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee expressed his displeasure to Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal and SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra for honouring the relatives of some militants at the newly constructed Akal Takht at Amritsar on Baisakhi Day. To defuse the situation, the Akali leadership felt sorry for this development and promised that such development would not be allowed to occur in the future.

Lok Sabha elections in Punjab, along with whole of the country were held in 1998. The Akali Dal and BJP decided to contest these elections in alliance with each other. However, the distribution of seats between the two parties became a source of conflict. While the Akali Dal wanted to leave only two seats (Amritsar, Gurdaspur) to the BJP and the BJP demanded five

19. See, *The Tribune*, May 15, 1999.

20. See, J.A.Khan, "Agami Vidhan Sabha Chona Sabandhi Vishleshan" (Punjabi), *Punjabi Tribune*, January 9, 2002.

21. See, *The Tribune*, April 21, 1997.

seats (the other three being, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur and Ludhiana). In addition to this, the Akali Dal had also demarcated 55 more Lok Sabha seats outside Punjab where the Sikhs could play an important role in influencing the outcome of the elections. The Akali Dal was demanding share from these seats also. It laid its claim over atleast four Lok Sabha seats outside Punjab. The Akali leadership conveyed to the BJP that their party wanted to field its candidates from one constituency each in Haryana, U.P., Rajasthan and Delhi.²² In addition to this, the Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat had also become a bone of contention between the two alliance partners. While the Akali Dal offered this seat to I.K. Gujral (the P.M.) for his efforts to get Rs. 8500 crores, loan of Punjab waived through his personal efforts, the BJP was not agreeing to this proposal and even dissuaded the Akali Dal from doing so. But political affair committee of Akali Dal ultimately decided to allot this seat to Mr. Gujral for the "generosity" shown by him towards Punjab. On this issue, the Akali Dal remained firm and conveyed that other political parties are free to take their own decision. As far as the SAD is concerned, it will do everything possible for the victory of Mr. Gujral and will firmly campaign for him.²³

Both the parties had also different perception on the role of Punjab police in the changed Punjab situation. While the Akali Dal was in favour of curtailing the powers of police and wanted that the police officers facing inquiries in terrorist cases should not be defended on the government expenditure. The BJP did not agree with this perception of Akali Dal and wanted a more effective role for Punjab police even in the situation so that militancy is not revived again.

An unfortunate and unsavoury controversy had been sparked off over the acceptance and implementation of the Nanakshahi Calendar. The "Calendar" was prepared after great deal of research and consultations by a Canada based Sikh Pal Singh Purewal. The Nanakshahi Calendar published by the SGPC had a foreword by former President of the SGPC late Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra.²⁴ Bibi Jagir Kaur after becoming the President of SGPC decided to implement this calendar. However, due to the ban imposed by Giani Purn Singh, Jathedar Akal Takht, who did not subscribe to the Nanakshahi calendar, it could not be implemented. This resulted in tension in religio-political set up. The calendar is based on universally accepted solar system. The RSS was not in favour of the implement of Nanakshahi calendar at any cost. It opposed of its implementation and the BJP supported RSS on this issue. This attitude of alliance partner towards purely religious issue of the Sikhs deteriorated the relationship of the two partners.

An other important irritant in the relationship of the two alliance

22. See, *Ibid.*, December 28, 1997.

23. See, *Ibid.*, December 17, 1997.

24. See, *Ibid.*, March 19, 1998.

partners (i.e. Akali Dal and BJP) was BJP led central government's decision to include U.P.'s Sikh populated Udham Singh Nagar district into the proposed Uttaranchal State. The Akali Dal gave warning to the BJP led government at the centre that if the Uttaranchal state was created out by including Udham Singh Nagar district it could withdraw support from the Centre's coalition government.²⁵ However, later on the Akali dal agreed to the constitution of a committee headed by George Fernandes, the Defence Minister of India and Punjab Chief Minister Badal and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh as members, to find a solution to this issue. The committee was expected to submit its report to the Prime Minister before 30 November, 1998.²⁶ The Uttaranchal Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha even without waiting for the report of the George Fernandes Committee.

After the inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttaranchal, the question arose as to whether Akali Dal should continue its support to BJP led government at the Centre? The Akali leaders argued that continuing the alliance with the BJP was more important as it was not based just on political considerations but stood for unity and amity of Punjab people. They observed that it was the alliance which ended the alienation of the Sikhs at the national level after years of militancy in Punjab.²⁷ The inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar district in the proposed state of Uttaranchal against the wishes of the Akali Dal was just an irritant in the relationship with the BJP which signified much more than politics of convenience, having national interest as the bases. This was how Punjab Chief Minister perceived the companionship with the BJP in the post-Uttaranchal scenario after the Bill for the creation of the hill state had been adopted by both the Houses of Parliament. Though, the Akali dal opposed the Bill protesting the inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in the proposed state, but feeling that there was no alternative, Parkash Singh Badal justified his stand by stating that there was no alternative to the leadership of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.²⁸

The differences cropped up between the ruling coalition partners over the contents of the memorandum proposed to be submitted to the Constitutional Review Panel on behalf of the Punjab government. The Constitutional Review Panel was set up by the Atal Behari Vajpayee government in 2000 A.D. to recommend changes in the constitution of India, in the light of past experiences. The ruling alliance partners in Punjab could not agree on the draft of the memorandum prepared during series of meetings held under the chairmanship of Badal and attended by his Akali and BJP cabinet colleagues.²⁹ The Punjab Cabinet Minister and senior BJP

25. See, V. Venkatesan, "Aggressive Alties", *Frontline*, Vol. 15, No. 17, August 15-28, 1998, p.35.

26. See, *Ibid.*, "Persisting Contradictions", Vol. 15, No. 22, October 24-November 6, 1998, p.35.

27. See, *The Indian Express*, August 5, 2000.

28. See, *Ibid.*, August 12, 2000.

29. See, *Ibid.*

leader Balramji Das Tandon issued statement that the Punjab cabinet had not been able to reach a consensus on the issue as the BJP Ministers felt very strongly against the demand of the Akali Dal regarding the scrapping of Article 356 and the demand for greater autonomy for the state.³⁰ With the BJP distancing itself from the demand of "more powers to the states", agenda of the SAD, the Akali Dal decided to go it alone. Accordingly, on 28 August, 2000 the ruling Akali Dal submitted the memorandum to the Constitutional Review Panel on behalf of the Party.³¹ It was based on Anandpur Sahib Resolution.³² The memorandum laid stress on a truly federal structure in the context of the 1978 version of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. A separate draft was prepared on behalf of the state government which used the term autonomy while repeatedly drawing upon the earlier Sarkaria Commission Report of 1987. While demanding constitutional safeguards for the minorities, the Akali Dal proposed amendment in Article 25 which clubs Sikhs with the Hindus. The draft stated that clause 2(b) of Article 25 should be reworded to avoid clubbing Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists with Hindus.³³ It was also proposed that to clause 1 of Article 29 relating to protection of the interests of minorities, the word 'religion' should be added to cover religious minorities as well. Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal had constituted one broad based committee to prepare the case on behalf of the party for a total federation structure. The second committee was set up to prepare the memorandum for the state government. However, under the pressure from the coalition partner (BJP), the decision to submit a case on behalf of the state government was reversed.³⁴ The BJP was averse to the use of word autonomy and wanted the use of word 'more powers for the state' in the memorandum.³⁵ Balramji Dass Tandon also expressed his opposition to the proposal of amendment in Article 25 of the constitution as presented by the SAD before the Constitutional Review Committee. He observed that though the Sikhs had a separate identity of their own but the Hindus, the Sikhs, the Jains and Buddhists belong to the same stream as their basic approach was the same. He held that the claim of the Akali Dal, that Sikhs were a separate *qaum* was not correct. He added that the BJP stood by the concept of Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiya, adopted by the Akali Dal in 1996 at Moga as its official policy.³⁶

The differences also cropped up between the ruling alliance partners on the issues of free water and electricity to the farmers. Punjab BJP President Brij Lal Rinwa said that there had been a lack of coordination

30. See, *Ibid.*, August 19, 2000.

31. See, *Ajit* (Punjabi Daily), August 29, 2000.

32. See, *The Indian Express*, August 24, 2000.

33. See, *Ajit* (Punjabi Daily), op.cit.

34. See, *The Indian Express*, August 31, 2000.

35. See, *Ibid.*, August 1, 2000.

36. See, *Ibid.*, September 4, 2000.

between two coalition partners in policy making and taking vital policy decisions which had put a question mark over the performance of government. He said free water and electricity to farmers had restrained the World Bank from granting a loan of Rs.900 crore to the Punjab government and the Centre had also become hesitant to advance liberal loans to the Punjab government. He observed there was rampant corruption in the government. The government had also taken various wrong decisions, including the hike in power tariff without consulting the BJP. He appealed to the Chief Minister to set up SAD-BJP district level coordination committee to monitor the joint working of the government.³⁷ He warned that if the coalition is to succeed, the Akali Dal must accord due respect to its partners. He said that for the next Assembly elections BJP would ask for 50% seats.³⁸ But Badal made it clear that the alliance was not just a political one on the basis of sharing of seats and power but was based on principles which continued to be dear to the Akali Dal.³⁹

The above discussion on working of Akali-BJP ministry in Punjab shows that despite Akali Dal's overwhelming majority in the Assembly and Central government's friendly attitude, the Akali led coalition ministry had to face many intra-party and inter-party problems. However, despite these problems, the ministry could manage to survive for its full tenure of five years. A study of the working of Akali-BJP coalition ministry in the state leads us to the following conclusions:

1. It was the only coalition ministry in Punjab which completed its full term of five years. The reasons of its stability were mainly three. One, it had an overwhelming majority in the Assembly and the numerical strength of opposition was very small. Because of this, the opposition was not in a position to topple the government. Two, due to anti-defection law there was no possibility of individual defections from the ruling partners. Three, it had the blessings of BJP led government at the centre.
2. In comparison to earlier coalition ministries formed in the state, the position of Chief Minister in this ministry was much more stronger. The Chief Minister had full control over the Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the party organization of SAD, the S.G.P.C. and the Akal Takht Jathedars. This strong position of Chief Minister was due to his stable position in the government.
3. It was the first Akali led coalition ministry in the state which had completely smooth relations with the central government. The main reason of these relations was that SAD and BJP were sharing power with each other in the state as well as in the centre.

37. See, *Ibid.*, July 4, 2000.

38. See, *The Tribune*, July 6, 2000.

39. See, *Ibid.*, July 10, 2000.

NANAVATI COMMISSION REPORT - AN OVERVIEW

Sangat Singh*

As Mao Tse Tung said, a thousand miles journey starts with a small step. Has that step been taken? It was in 1984 that the Sikhs were killed gruesomely in a pogrom in Delhi and other parts of India. Now, on August 8, 2005, the action taken report (ATR) and the report of Justice G.T. Nanavati presented six months earlier, February 9, 2005, was presented to the Parliament. These evoked a furor. The widows of 1984 holocaust whose husband/sons/other near and dear ones were subjected to inhuman and awful killings, some in their presence, performed a *siapa*, dirge, in New Delhi at both the ATR and the Report. This reflected the true feelings of the people concerned and members of the Sikh community who looked askance at the events. That represented a fairer assessment of 21 years of the people's frustration. There are others, some select Sikhs too, who have looked at 1984 in a different manner. Such people have either been indifferent to the Sikh community right from the beginning, or have had, some should say no brains. The 1984 events have seriously affected the Sikhs' sense of participation or belonging, and their relevance to the Indian union. This, as seen in 1984 events for the Sikhs, or those of Godhra in Gujarat for Muslims in 2002, practically reflect a Hindu framework, amidst a paper thin if not spurious, commitment to secularism.

The idea of a second commission to look afresh into 1984 events was the brainchild of the Sikh Forum, New Delhi, led by former Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora, assisted by Justice Ranjit Singh Narula, former Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court, Justice Jaspal Singh, H.S. Phoolka a leading lawyer, their Secretary, former Sq. Leader Randhir Singh Chhatwal, and others.¹ The idea was aired in November 1999 Conference at

* Author of *The Sikhs in History* (Amritsar, Singh Brothers, 2005) or *Itihas 'ch Sikh*, (Punjabi) or *Itihas main Sikh* (Hindi), acclaimed by Prof Noel Q.King, Professor-Emeritus of History and Comparative Religions, California University, Santa Cruz (USA) in the Foreword as one of the greatest works on Sikh History from the days of Cunningham and Macauliffe. It is very unfortunate that the Sikh leadership of various hues, including the political and religious one is not inclined to read Sikh history or religion, despite the dire times looking at them.

1. Parkash Singh Badal's Sharomani Akali Dal (Badal), running a Government in Punjab, had absolutely no role to play. The party had got 2 seats in snap polls to Lok Sabha in October 1999, as against 8 to the abominable Congress, and one each to BJP, Mann Akalis and Communists'. Following expulsion of Tohra from SGPC and the party, the government had been pawned to BJP which was running amuck in carrying on propaganda of Hindutava amongst Sikh youth from the countryside, who had, then 80 percent of them, become apostate. It was on a high road to overwhelm the Sikh identity.

Constitution Club, New Delhi, marking the 15th anniversary of the Sikh pogrom. People, like K.R.Malkani, a prominent BJP leader and member of Upper House of Parliament was also present and welcomed the idea. The induction of NDA multi-party government in snap elections to Lok Sabha in October 1999 with BJP's Atal Behari Vajpayee as Prime Minister provided the immediate provocation. Atal Behari Vajpayee had welcomed Operation Blue Star in June 1984, rather as the one which came six months late. BJP, however, pursued a policy of duplicity to paper over the allies agenda.

The issue of another Commission came up in Upper House in the Budget Session of Parliament in early 2000 when people like Kuldip Nayar and K.R.Malkani were sucked in. The BJP leaders looked to the Congress benches, but Dr.Manmohan Singh, leader of the Congress Party in Rajya Sabha was not amused. The real feelings of BJP section of Government at the Centre were reflected in the contrived killing of 35 Sikhs of Chattisinghpura in Kashmir Valley in March 2000, during U.S. President, Bill Clinton's visit to India, through state-sponsored surrendered-militants. Farook Abdulla, Kashmir Chief Minister, then in New Delhi, who came to know of the details of the incident, was silenced to toe the Centre's line or keep mum. During this period, there was lot of interaction between Congress and BJP, which lacked a majority in the Upper House. The formation of Uttaranchal, Vanachal, and Chhatisgarh in 2000 was a case in point, when Badal Akalis unwisely sacrificed the interests of the people of Udhham Singh Nagar. During these confabulations, the name of Mr. Justice G.T. Nanavati, who had recently retired, a non BJP even now is a Judge of Supreme Court was agreed to. In my work, *The Sikhs in History* (2002 edn. pp.528-29) I wrote that Advani had appointed G.T.Nanavati Commission to have a fresh look into 1984 genocide of the Sikhs only "after obtaining concurrence of Sonia Gandhi, and after assuring that no non-Sikh [i.e. Hindu or Muslim] would come to any grief for the Commission's report. This would be only of academic interest, if not a lollypop. The Commission's report is expected later in 2002."

Neither Congress since 1984, nor BJP now in 2000 was interested in disclosing the truth about 1984 atrocities on the Sikhs. As preordained, Nanvati Commission Report was only an eye wash. If Mr.Justice Ranganath Mishra who headed the first Commission was termed by some one as a Commission Agent of the Congress, the position of Mr. Justice Nanavati, I am afraid, could not be any different. Secondly, the inordinate delay in submission of Nanavati Commission Report was simply not because of his being appointed to do the whitewashing of the Godhra Enquiry, but to other reasons.

We may now look into what Mr. Justice Nanavati did not chose to do, or did not like to do.

Mr. Partap Singh, retired D.I.G. of Border Security Force in his affidavit to Nanavati Commission mentions that in early 1984 as very senior

officers he and some others, including Mani Shankar Aiyer, then of Indian Foreign Service and now a Cabinet Minister, who accidentally is married to a Sikh lady, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, then in Finance Ministry and others, used to be carried in a Van early morning from their residences to Central Secretariat. One fine morning in early 1984, M.S. Aiyer, to the hearing of all, mentioned that at the instance of Indira Gandhi, "he was given an unpleasant job of portraying Sikhs as terrorists." A few days later, Aiyer stated that "against his wishes he had done that job,"² This was before the Operation Blue Star, the orders for which had been delivered in January 1984. From internal evidence, it seems that this note was used after the Operation Blue Star in Indian Army's *baat cheet*, talking points, saying that *amritdhari*, baptized, Sikhs though looking very innocent were actually potential terrorists. The *baat cheet* unabashedly declared Guru Gobind Singh to be the fountainhead of the Sikh militancy, and virtually declared war on him.³

Early in 1960s Jawaharlal Nehru, a Brahmin, had conceived of *state terrorism* to confront Master Tara Singh's Punjabi Suba movement. Now, Indira was giving it a tangible shape. Looking into that, one could term Indira Gandhi as the mother, founder, originator of terrorism or state terrorism as a policy against the Sikhs: it was the hallmark of the government policy vis-a-vis the Sikhs for at least a decade.

Pertinently, the British intelligence agency in 1997 reported that the Punjab/Indian police in U.K./Europe was encouraging the movement for Khalistan and P.C. Dogra, KPS Gill's successor as Director General Punjab Police, admitted in September 1997 that Punjab Police did play a role in encouraging militancy. Parkash Singh Badal was then Chief Minister of Punjab. Did he learn anything?

It is for the Sikhs in North America/Britain/Europe, etc. to bring this to the notice of authorities - the US Presidency, senators, Governors and members of Cabinet and Legislators in Canada, Britain, Europe, etc. that the Sikhs were victims of state terrorism with Indira Gandhi as its mother/founder/originator.⁴

Nanavati Commission left it that, and not unexpectedly did not probe into that any further.

Normally a judge of Supreme Court is a learned man - learned not only in laws, but also the matters that come into field of his enquiry.

Mention may be made here of two works: one, of Prof Cynthia Keppley Mahmood of Department of Anthropology's, *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogue with Sikh Militants* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press 1996) and two, *Memoirs of Indira's Principal Secretary*

2. *Nanavati Commission Report*, p.135.

3. *The Sikhs in History*, 2001 edn., p.408: 2002/05 edn., p.384.

4. Could one expect some thing from people in North America, including Gurdwara set ups to apprise the people of the truth.

P.C. Alexander, "My Years with Indira Gandhi: first published in a series of articles in *Economic Times*, Delhi in 1990 (and later published in a book form with some changes).

Cynthia mentions of three sources for Indira's *Operation Shanti* around November 8, 1984, when Sikhs would be busy with Guru Nanak's birthday celebrations: they were to be subjected to massive massacres. Large scale skirmishes, virtually amounting to war, were to take place along India-Pakistan borders, and it was to be given out that Sikhs had risen in revolt in Punjab and joined hands with Pakistani armed forces which had made considerable advances into Indian territory. Elaborate arrangements had been made with the help of hoodlums of Youth Congress. This plan got leaked to major international intelligence agencies. President Zia-ul Haq made earnest attempts to ward off the war and at this instance Pakistan's Ambassador, bypassing the Indian Foreign Office, called on P.C. Alexander on October 25 to convey his President's proposal for senior level talks, without any preconditions, Alexander authenticates that. He also mentions that on October 27, 1984, Indira visited Kashmir Valley when, inter alia, she got an omen, confirmed in interpretation by her family astrologer, of her imminent death. This remained uppermost, in her mind during her trip to Bhubaneshwar on October 29-30. Meanwhile Beant Singh got contours of Indira's *Operation Shanti*, probably from Indira's Special Assistant, R.K.Dhawan, and with the help of Satwant Singh shot her to death early next morning. The Sikhs suffered heavily during next 3-4 days, but the loss would have been tremendous, if *Operation Shanti* had gone into operation.

Justice Nanavati did not like to go into these events and perform his judicial functions. He did not call on P.C. Alexander or R.K.Dhawan as was with many others, to swear an oath and mention the truth. Nanavati must have earned the gratification of Congress stalwarts.

As already stated, J. Nanavati's report was expected to offer only a lollypop, but the Government on August 8, presented the Parliament two lollypops.

One, the ATR, as adopted without a discussion in cabinet mellowed the whatsoever, involved recommendations J. Nanavati could make: it said that in "Criminal cases, a person cannot be prosecuted simply on the basis of probability." Hence, it sought to absolve Congress leaders at senior level.

Two, J. Nanavati in his report exonerated the top political leaders of all responsibility in the pogrom of the Sikhs. He did not want to believe that Rajiv Gandhi could have wanted the Sikhs to be taught a lesson, despite some non-Sikh witnesses telling him so, and swearing an oath.⁵ He did not

5. *Nanavati Commission Report*, pp.128, 135.

I had written in the very first edition of this work (see chapter-10, f.n. 1), on the basis of my talks with a RAW Inspector who was deputed to receive Rajiv Gandhi on October 31, 1984, coming from Calcutta by an air force plane at 15.40 hours at

(Contd. on Page 116)

make any reference to Rajiv's saying publicly that 'when a big tree falls, the earth below trembles.' Did the earth consist only of Sikhs and had Hindus/Muslims taken leave to absent themselves from the land? He dissuaded himself from referring to Rajiv's using the anti-Sikh diatribes in December 1984 elections to gain the biggest number of seats in Lok Sabha and getting the biggest number of Hindu vote in elections.

Rajiv Gandhi was of course dead. What about Dr. P.C. Alexander, his Principal Secretary, and his Home Minister, P.V. Narsimha Rao? He did not ask Dr. Alexander to swear an oath and be cross-examined, including contradictions in his Memoirs of his 'Days with Indira Gandhi' as first published in *Economic Times* in 1990 in a series of articles and 14 years later in book form. Similarly, he did not allow P.V. Narsimha Rao to be cross examined. Why? Here, Nanavati was not functioning as a Judge, but on his own personal whims, keeping in view the time he took in presenting his report.

Both Sikhs and non-Sikhs mentioned that Home Minister Narsimha Rao showed mental and physical inertia, looked casual, unconcerned and lukewarm. How could he act, when his Prime Minister wanted the Sikhs to be taught a lesson? Nanavati Report (p.179) says, "Probably, there was a desire on the part of some persons to teach a lesson to the Sikhs". Who they were or he was? The Commission, here, shirks its responsibility, or courage, or its orientation. It further says, "the attacks were made in a systematic manner and without much fear of police almost suggesting that they were assured that they would not be harmed while committing those acts and even thereafter.⁶ Male members of the Sikh community were taken out of their houses. They were beaten first and then burnt alive in a systematic manner. This was a common pattern...an angry outburst became an organised carnage."

Further that: "As the attacks on Sikhs appear to the Commission as

(Contd. from the previous page)

Palam Airport: Rajiv told those present to receive him, "My mother has been shot dead. What are you doing here? Go and take revenge. No turban (distinctive Sikh headdress) should be seen." Now, Gurtej narrates that after his swearing in as Prime Minister on October 31, 1984, along with some members of his Cabinet, he immediately held a formal meeting consisting of Arun Nehru, Arjun Singh, Narsimha Rao and one more, when he gave clear cut instruction that the Sikhs must be 'taught a lesson'. This was recorded on a tape and unearthed when Dr. Manmohan Singh, then Finance Minister under Narsimha Rao regime, ordered a raid on a Bombay Businessman's bank locker. When the CBI Officer, who conducted the raid brought it to him, Manmohan Singh "heard it played and became visibly nervous with his hands trembling spontaneously, gesticulating emphatically with his ashen face, terrified eyes and uncontrollably trembling, he (Manmohan Singh) asked that the tape be taken away and destroyed." See, Gurtej Singh's 'Some aspects of Nanavati Commission Report' in the *Sikh Bulletin*, El Dorado Hills, CA, USA, October-November 2005, p.5.

6. Is this, "even thereafter" valid even now for Nanavati Commission? Did not he live up to it?

organized, and attempts were made to see who were responsible for the same. Whatever, acts were done, were done by the local Congress (I) leaders and workers, and they appear to have done so for their personal political reasons”.

The Commission mentions a number of times that this carnage would go on for 3 days, when the army would be called in and the incidents brought to a close. Who gave this time framework? And, of not calling in the Army? The local Congress (I) leaders, of whom Nanavati points to, were not capable to take any such decision. Who took that decision? But the Commission does not apply its mind and even by process of elimination could have come to the correct conclusions, unless it negated its biased character?

Later the ATR and the Nanavati Report created a commotion in both the houses of Parliament: these had to be adjourned amidst accusations of Sikh-holocaust and Godhra one. The opposition NDA, including the crafty BJP, and the vociferous SAD (Badal), were not surprisingly joined by the Leftists - an important constituent of the ruling coalition. They tilted the balance to the shock of the government. They, in no uncertain terms, told those in power that they would vote for the opposition's adjournment motion, leading to the fall of the government. Besides, it shocked the media - press and the TV channels - and the people. The Sikhs, especially affected by 1984 pogrom, burnt the Report, giving a tangible shape to their sense of resentment.

It was disclosed for the first time in 21 years that Harkishan Singh Surjeet, considered as Indira's main surrogate on Punjab, along with other senior leaders of Communist Party Marxist (CPM), were on November 1, 1984, at Tin Murti House to pay homage to the dead Indira, when he was spotted by the mob for his turban. He could have been lynched, but for the fortuitous circumstances of a senior Intelligence Officer asking him to reach his Jeep; he was transported to the Party's Central Office, where he remained for the next three days. I don't want to recount here the wretched conditions of Giani Zail Singh who had committed the stupidity of inducting as Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, a nin-com-poop (not an M.P., much less a Minister) at the cost of Pranab Mukherjee who used to preside over Cabinet in absence of Indira, and who had vetted his bio-data prepared by press Information Bureau, for being inducted as interim Prime Minister, as had happened twice earlier on death of Nehru and Shastri or other Sikh leaders like General Jagjit Singh Aurora, victor of East Pakistan, who now needed refuge to save their skins, and others.

While the CPI termed the ATR “thoroughly disappointing” it termed the Nanavati Report most “disappointing” and “self-contradictory in its conclusions.” The CPI (M) polit buro stated that “after 21 years it is a dismal state of affairs that justice cannot be rendered to the thousands who

suffered in the pogrom." Both wanted that "wherever the Commission speaks of credible evidence, prosecution should be launched".

The Left leaders specifically wanted action against the Union Minister Jagdish Tytler and Lok Sabha M.P., Sajjan Kumar's role in the riots, action against the police officers who had retired or were retiring, and adequate compensation package for the widows and orphans of the pogrom.

Sonia Gandhi along with the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and others went into the huddle, and decided to accept the left's demands. Jagdish Tytler handed over his papers to Sonia Gandhi and not to the Prime Minister, and it was accepted on August 10. Sajjan Kumar was forced to quit as Chairman of the Delhi Rural Development Board with an annual budget of Rs.1 billion. The Government decided to amend the ATR as per Nanavati Report, and later set up two committees to look into reopening of the cases and into the compensation and other benefits to be paid to the victims.

What, however, stands out is Dr. Manmohan Singh's attempt on August 11, to tender an apology to the Sikhs for 1984 riots in Parliament. Personally, he was speaking from conviction when he said, "I bow my head in shame that such a thing took place", and that "I apologise not only to the Sikh Community but to the whole nation, because what took place in 1984 is a negation of the concept of nationhood enshrined in the constitution. I am not standing on any false prestige. On behalf of our government, on behalf of the entire people of this country, I bow my head in shame". Here was the Prime Minister, who did not spell out that Indira was the Founder of State Terrorism vis a vis the Sikhs. He, however, mentioned that both the Judicial Commissions, headed by Mishra and Nanavati, did not indict Rajiv Gandhi for his direct involvement. For the common man both had discarded their judicial functions, and acted as Commission Agents.

At one level, there was a lot of opinion praising the Prime Minister for his apology. One BJP spokesman held it as an example, and wanted BJP to also tender a similar apology for Godhra violence in 2002. There were, however, others, like Sikh representatives who looked at it as a forced one, not unqualified, and wanted Sonia Gandhi as representative of the Congress and the Nehruvian family to apologise. The *Spokesman* (Chandigarh) in its issue of September 2005 put out a reasoned plea, asking for more.

Now we come to reaction of media. The press wrote profusely for justice for 1984 victims. Khushwant Singh in his syndicated column in the *Hindustan Times* was explicit: "it did not occur to Nanavati, or any other heads of Commissions of inquiry, that the police could never have behaved the way it did, had it not been told by those at the top level not to stand in the way of rioters...Nanavati, you have done grave injustice to the nation."

In a round table discussion over Television, Chief editor of the prestigious weekly, *Outlook*, Shri Ved Mehta openly wondered that Delhi

was on fire for three days, and how was it that both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister were unenlightened or uninformed of the gruesome happenings in their surroundings. He implicitly suggested the involvement of both. Some members of the Sikh Forum too appeared over. T.V. stations, but did not catch the damage Nanavati Commission had done. Sukhbir Singh Badal, SAD (B) M.P. tried to take credit that Nanavati Commission had been appointed by the BJP government, an ally of Akalis. What was there to take credit at the Commission's perfunctory work? Whether he was talking through his turban or head, I leave it to people to decide. Later, Parkash Singh Badal sought to make a point for action against those indicted by Nanavati Commission - the point which already the Leftists had performed effectively.

Nanavati deliberately let off police officers from worst massacre site, Trilokpuri, where gruesome massacre of Sikhs had taken place. Sewa Dass, then SHO Trilokpuri, is now scheduled to retire in end-September 2005. He admitted to have got information on November 1, 1984 at 15, 10 hours, and the Commission observed, "Vital information appears to have been suppressed deliberately by the police at all levels and the gravity of the situation was tried to be minimized." Since Sewa Dass had been exonerated by the departmental enquiry, the Commission did not recommend any action against him. The yardstick applied regarding South Delhi was quite to the contrary, because Nanavati was not a man of principles.

The real reason was that Kishori, a butcher, who had cut with his *toka*, (butcher's knife) several Sikhs including three brothers known to him, came from Trilokpuri. He had been acquitted in four cases and sentenced to death by High Court in three cases. Two cases in which he had been sentenced to death came for review to a Bench of two Hindu Judges including G.T. Nanavati. Here the Bench manufactured a number of reasons: that medical evidence about the death of these persons was not available (if they had applied their mind they would have seen that medical reports in Indira's case were not produced in evidence and on that count Satwant Singh and Kehar Singh should have been acquitted) and it was twice mentioned that women and children were not killed and that was a redeeming feature: they did not mention that women were subjected to rape in certain cases. They reduced Kishori's death sentence to that of life imprisonment. Nanavati in his Report mentioned of half a dozen time of this butcher Kishori's exploits, and shows a lingering sympathy for him when he writes, "...so far as Kishori is concerned he had been convicted and is facing the death-sentence". This only reflects his understanding that no non-Sikh i.e. a Hindu or Muslim, was to be sentenced to death for killing, of what P.M. said, 4000 Sikhs in 1984. He did not want to open the wounds in East Delhi to help out Kishori, if need be.

If any of these Judges, four of them, who dealt with Kishori's death

sentence at Supreme Court level, had any of their son/grand son butchered in a riot, by say a Mr.K., he or his nominee would argue that the person who was killed was a Hindu, a caste Hindu at that, and that he belonged to the *ruling race*, and therefore the High Court Judgement sentencing Mr. K to death should not be disturbed. The G.T. Nanavati judgement was not applicable in this case. Even the Judgement says, "It would be unfortunate if this ruling serves as a precedent to mitigate offences committed by such mobs." Kishori had killed some Sikhs who were irrelevant people, but Mr. K's killing of a caste Hindu falls in a different category.

It is debatable that Nanavati's involved recommendations in cases against Congress M.P.s, or police personnel would yield some positive results. Time shall show. It may be mentioned that Julio Ribeiro, as Director General Punjab Police, mentions of some opportunities along with Punjab Governor Siddharth Shankar Ray to see Rajiv Gandhi, when he spoke of the need to take action against Sajjan Kumar, H.K.L. Bhagat and others for their involvement in 1984 pogrom. He, however, was advised by Ray not to do so. Once, he mentions, he had the opportunity to see Rajiv Gandhi along when he "brought in this question of prosecuting Sajjan Kumar and H.K.L. Bhagat to assuage the hurt feelings of the Sikh peasantry." He continues, "Rajiv lost his temper and told me in no uncertain terms that he did not like to hear this again because he personally was a witness to the fact that Sajjan Kumar never left his place besides his mother's body after the assassination and hence could not have instigated the crowds." This means that all the evidence recorded by various Commissions, including J. Ranganath Mishra or J.G.T. Nanavati and others was bunkum. Actually, what Rajiv Gandhi was speaking to Ribeiro was the Gandhian brand of truth. In the words of Nirad C. Chaudhury one going through voluminous Gandhian literature finds himself non-plussed, as to what really he means by truth.

The work, *The Mitrokhin Archive, Volume II: The KGB and the World*, published in mid-October, 2005, according to the main points published in *Times*, London, indicates the process of Soviet penetration in India right from 1970, and attributes the success to corruption that became endemic in Indira Gandhi's regime.

S.P. Bharucha, former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India, said in February 2002 that 20 per cent of Judges at highest level were known to be corrupt. I spoke to a Senior Advocate of Supreme Court and was told that the number of corrupt Judges was rather 80 per cent. In such circumstances, where corruption reigns in highest judiciary, what the poor Sikhs can hope to obtain from one or the other Judges, especially when the Sikh leadership is inept, and uses the SGPC as sources of money-making, rather than to advance Panthic causes.

The Akali Dals of various hues had ample opportunities to help the victims of 1984, but they did nothing to mitigate their sufferings. Rather

Sikh widows like Darshan Kaur, Satwant Kaur and Satnami Bai were beaten and pressurized in 1997 at the instance of H.K.L. Bhagat, not to tender evidence against him by senior leaders belonging to SAD (Badal) in Delhi who were rewarded amply by that doyen of the underworld.

If victims of 1984 could obtain some tangible concessions in jobs and financial assistance, they should thank the Leftists for that rather than these so-called Panthic leaders.

The prestigious weekly *India Today*, New Delhi, of September 12, 2005, (pp.66-74) brought out a special write up on 1984 consisting of five interviews with those affected by the pogrom. It sadly commented that because of lawless Judiciary, "many are losing faith in the country itself." It quoted Mrs. Vibha Sethi, 65, to say: "I did not expect much from Nanavati Commission...I feel betrayed. I have lost faith in the country. Look at the way the system failed...Manmohan Singh's apology that came after so many protests carries no weight, all that he said was what he should have said before signing the Action Taken Report...Why am I being treated like a foreigner in my country?" That truly represents the feeling of the general body of the Sikhs, except those who are surrogates of Congress/BJP, and those whose hands are drenched in Gurdwara Funds, all over.

BOOK-REVIEW-I

***Minority Politics in the Punjab - Prior to 1966*, by Baldev Raj Nayar, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966, Pages 373.**

The author of the book under review was Professor of Political Science in the "Centre for Developing Area Studies", McGill University, Canada and his Ph.D dissertation was "contemporary Political Leadership in the Punjab" presented to University of Chicago in 1963.

The extensive bibliography from pages 349 to 360 clearly shows the seriousness with which the author has pursued his studies and comes out with a commendable work for the benefit of general readers and specialists alike. The author has made full use of statistical data, interview technique and content analysis methods for writing the book. The difficulty which I have to confront with this book is that it is so packed with informations, analysis and arguments that each chapter I feel, almost deserves a separate review itself.

The book is the result of the field work in the undivided Punjab from 1961 to 1963 and presents a critical survey of the politics of the state since independence.

The author deals in considerable detail with the activities of the S.A.D (Shiromani Akali Dal) and its struggle for a Punjabi Suba. Writing before the creation of this Suba, Dr. Nayar was fully conscious of the objection to it and evidently believed that the Government of India would not yield to Sikh pressure.

Two major aspects:

Minority Politics in the Punjab focuses on two major aspects of the problem:

- a) It analyses the basis and characteristics of the demand for the formation of the Punjabi Suba.
- b) Secondly, in the context of the Political situation in the Punjab, Prof. Nayar re-examines the question on the implications of social diversity in India for national unity and democracy. He states that the wide diversity within and between the sixteen states of India provide an assurance against domination by any single group and in turn enables different socio-religious groups to look to the centre for protection.

In the first chapter of his study Dr. Nayar explains the situation in the world after world war-II when many nations in Asia and Africa got their independence. Under the influences of the West, new social and political

forces were generated which gave rise to new set of local leaders. Immediately after the freedom new strains developed in the political system as a result of political claims made in the name, not of the nation but of race, religion, language, caste or tribe. The major political problem that confronts these nations is: how to maintain a viable political system in the face of these divisions.

In India, immediately, after the partition, the question of reorganisation of the state boundaries on a linguistic basis came up. The Government established several committees and commissions- the Das Commission ; the J.V.P. Committee and finally the state Reorganization Commission to inquire into the basis for the reorganisation of states. The pattern of states' reorganisation that eventually emerged was largely that of unilingual states which gave rise to greater regional consciousness, and regional loyalties. *Thus linguistic, Cultural, Regionalism and Religious-based communalism* became the main threat to the political framework of India.

Apart from the divisive factors of regionalism and communalism there is present, what is called casteism in India. Although caste plays an important role in the politics of India, but no territorial demand have emerged from caste divisions. Caste politics assume more the nature of pressure group politics.

In the second chapter the author examines the social and political context in which the demand for a Punjabi Suba was made. He studies the nature of the demand and answer the question, *if this demand was a language-based regional demand or a religious based communal one.*

The Punjab as a whole was considered bilingual, and political divisions of the state demarcated its area into what were called Hindi speaking and Punjabi speaking regions, but in essence representing Hindu-majority and Sikh majority areas. After quoting the figures from the two censuses reports of 1951 and 1961 regarding the religious composition of Hindi-speaking and Punjabi speaking regions, the author enumerates various divisions in the social set up of the undivided Punjab.

1. Conflict between the Punjabi speaking and Hindi speaking regions.
2. Conflict in the rural areas between the high caste landowning agricultural classes whether Hindu or Sikh and the scheduled castes (20.3%).
3. Conflict between the people of rural area and urban area.
4. Cleavage between the Hindus and Sikhs.
5. Hindu leaders in the Hindi speaking area sometime directly or indirectly supported the claims of certain sections of the Sikh community, which the Hindus of Punjabi speaking region felt infurious.

6. Within the Sikh community the division between Jat and non-Jat.
7. Conflict between the refugees and the locals.

Apart from the Congress party, there are three other organised political parties in the politics of the Punjab; the S.A.D., the Bhartiya Jana Sangh and the Communist Party. In this context the author has all praises for the Congress Party when he says that all three levels of the political system-Govt., regime and political community are identified with it. He claimed it to be the sole representative of the entire Indian nation - the party is recognised as the creator of free India, the Indian nation, whereas he lashes upon the Akali Dal by saying that it is opposed to all that Congress Party stands for. Further without peeping into the long records of sufferings and sacrifices of the Akali Dal and consistent boosting it received from the Congress, the author makes another sweeping remark that ever since the inception of the S.A.D. it has been in the fore-front of making extremist demands.

The first systematic presentation of the Punjabi Suba plan was made before the States Reorganisation Commission appointed by the Government of India in 1953. The Akali Dal argued that the demand of the Punjabi Suba was in line with demands in other parts of India for the linguistic reorganisation of states. In its opinion unilingual states were necessary in order to provide for the conduct of education and administration in the language of the area. The Akali Dal maintained that the Punjabis have a distinctive common culture and a common mother tongue recognised in their Indian Constitution, should, therefore have their own state. The Akali Dal asserted that the Punjabi Suba was not to be an independent country, but would be subject to Central control. The Akali Dal was of the view that the formation of Punjabi Suba would lead to the following beneficial results:

- (i) The creation of a geographical compact economically sound and financially viable state.
- (ii) It would eradicate communal unrest and provide education through the mother tongue in a single language state.

But Dr. Nayar is of the view that these objectives range from the attainment for the Sikhs as a community the dominant position in the political affairs of the Punjab to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Sikh State. The author further remarks that *the Punjabi is a language of the Sikhs*.

There had been vigorous opposition to the demand of Punjabi Suba from the Hindu community, the Sikh Harijans and the Nationalist leadership. The Hindus not only opposed the demand of Punjabi Suba but pressed their own demand for Maha Punjab. The Hindus suspected the demarcation of the boundaries of Punjabi Suba by the S.A.D. as a shrewd attempt to convert the 20% minority into a 53% majority. Turning to the question of language as a basis for the formation of states, the various Hindu organisations argued that

the people covered by the proposed Greater Punjab spoke some variant of the same generic language and that all the dialects in the area are derived from the same language. The Hindus in the Punjabi speaking region reacted by disowning the Punjabi language itself and they argued that their attachment to Hindi was of no recent origin and that while they spoke a Punjabi "dialect" in their homes, they had never used it in correspondence or for commercial, education or religious purposes. For the Sikhs the denial by Hindus of the Punjabi language was perceived as an attempt to destroy their culture. The nationalists objected the demand for Punjabi Suba because they considered it a Communal demand. There was, in addition, the unstated fear that such a state may later become the base of a secessionist movement, especially when it borders on a hostile neighbour.

In the third chapter the author examines the basis, origin and the motivating factors behind the demand. And in doing so he traces back, the history of the Sikh community. Here the author remarks that the recent reform movements in Sikhism have emphasized that the Sikhs are a separate political entity, that their religion and politics are combined and that they must have political power as a group. Dr. Nayar further observes that the Akali leadership deemed Punjabi Suba especially important because of the alleged tendency among the Sikhs towards unorthodoxy in the observance of the prescribed external symbols, most prominently the wearing of unshorn hair. As a political party the Akali Dal considers itself to be the sole representative of the Panth, and even equates itself with the Panth.

Prof. Nayar further remarks that in one respect, the demand for Punjabi Suba represents the political aspirations of a religious group to nationhood, especially in view of the historical memories of having been the sovereign rulers of the Punjab about "a hundred years ago". In another respect it represents the channeling into the political system of social problem, that of religious unorthodoxy, that the religious community feels unable to handle by itself without political power in the hands of the community as such.

The nationalist leadership opposes the demand of Punjabi Suba, for it views it as political threat to the present secular regime and to national unity. In the state of Punjab there is among the leaders who profess belief in secular nationalism, a large body of representatives from the Sikh community who vigorously oppose the demand for Punjabi Suba. From this version it seems that the author has not studied the point of view expressed by the Congressmen before the States Reorganisation Commission. It is an open secret that majority of the Hindu Congressmen advocated merger of Himachal Pradesh and Pepsu in the Punjab, while a large number of Sikh Congressmen supported the demand of the Punjabi speaking province.

In the fourth chapter the author describes the differences and similarities in the social background of the two types of leadership in

conflict over the demand of Punjabi Suba and while doing so he provides an insight into the goals and aims, these leaders seek in politics and the patterns of their recruitment to politics. Here I may remark that in doing so the author does not write anything regarding the leadership of Jan Sangh and Arya Samaj and thus in a way the study of Akali and Congress leadership becomes incomplete. In order to provide some answers to the above mentioned proposition Mr. Nayar provides a statistical analysis, based upon his personal interviews of Akali and Congress Candidates who ran for the Punjab Legislature Assembly in 1962 from Ludhiana. While studying the specific case of the Akali Dal, the author is of the view that the political leaders have been able to mobilise political support on the basis of the appeal of the Sikh Panth as a separate political entity but their political behaviour in public at least barring a few exception - does not indicate an enduring commitment to the concept underlying the appeal. Despite the radical disparity between the Akali Dal ideology and Congress ideology there have been several large migrations of Akali leaders to the Congress party in the period since partition. This is not to suggest that the pursuit of personal goals is the sole and only motive in the transfer of such leaders to the Congress party. On the contrary, the author is of the view, that there may well be in addition a vital interest on the part of Akali leaders to maximize political power for the Akali Dal or the Sikh community, which can be done only through joining a party that is in control of the Government. Both personal and group goals may thus be pursued at the same time. The author here draws the attention towards a very important point that in many such like cases the preference for the personal goals or the new loyalty to secular nationalism supersedes their former public commitment to the Akali ideology. The author further remarks that the ambitious persons may merely utilise the communal appeal of the Akali Dal to acquire conveniently positions of leadership in the Akali Dal in the expectation that there may be opportunities later for transfer to a party with real political power and patronage.

The author is further of the view that in a hand and drawn-out struggle between the two political groups tended to consolidate power in the hands of the strong leaders in both groups which directly or indirectly tended in the replacement of a commitment to ideology, by personal loyalty to the leader. In their attempt to maintain control of the party organization, these strong leaders managed to deprive all possible rivals of important position and even membership, in their respective parties. The struggle between the Akali Dal and the Congress Party under the circumstances almost assumed the form of a personal contest between the two top leaders of the two parties, while the course of the conflict was powerfully influenced by the resources each leader and his party could command.

Therefore, the next chapter - the fifth one is the study of resources

of the Akali Dal.

In this chapter Prof. Nayar provides an interesting study regarding the resources, the Akali leadership commands and in light of this study he makes some judgement about the future course of the political conflict. The high level of organisation among the Sikhs is apparent in the existence apart from the thousands of associations, of a Central Committee (S.G.P.C.) to manage all Sikh historic shrines in the Punjab. The S.G.P.C. elected by the Sikh adult population, manages an annual budget of some 60 lakh rupees. In S.G.P.C., the Akali Dal has invariably been voted to power and has consequently controlled the resources of the S.G.P.C. The shrines also serve as the privileged sanctuaries from which anti-government agitation can be launched. The author is of the opinion that Shiromani Akali Dal had made quite effective use of its resources for the accomplishment of its political demands.

In the sixth chapter the author provides a thorough study regarding the various strategies employed by the Shiromani Akali Dal and the ways these strategies were handled by the nationalist leadership. According to the author three major strategies have been used by the Akali Dal for extracting political concessions from the Government.

1. The constitutional strategy, under which Akali leaders make use of the political institutions established by the Indian Constitution. They submit memorandas and petitions, wait in deputation on important officials and ministers, resort to courts, arrange public meetings and mass rallies, organise long marches, publicise their views through the mass media and participate in the parliamentary and electoral processes.
2. The infiltration strategy, under which Akali leaders and members joined Congress Party on a large scale to exploit factional division within the Congress party and to secure significant political concession from within, while other Akali leaders put pressure from outside through agitations.
3. The agitational strategy, under which Akali leaders launched morchas from the privileged sanctuaries of Sikh shrines and attempted to overwhelm the Government by sending out Jathas that deliberately violate the law in an endeavour to pack the jails and paralyse the government machinery.

The author is of the view that Punjabi Suba was a constant objective of the Akali Dal and each political concession obtained by the Akali Dal had been a step further towards the formation of Punjabi Suba. The Akali Dal first obtained the "parity formula" which put Hindus and Sikhs on an equal basis in terms of sharing cabinet positions. The "Sachar Formula" to facilitate language instruction, but the actual division of the Punjab into two language regions took place which was then, to serve as the basis for further

demands for Punjabi Suba. Later, building on this demarcation between so-called Hindi speaking and Punjabi speaking regions, regional committees with certain legislative powers were established through the "regional formula". Thus, every time the Akali Dal had arrived at a political settlement with the Government - a settlement which the government had presumed to be final - the Akali Dal had immediately moved on to the next step after consolidating the earlier concessions. The government had sought to satisfy Akali claims - though it too did so in the name of language - but it was in 1960-61 that it adopted a firm policy towards the Akali Dal. The author here remarks that it still remains to be seen how lasting their policy of firmness on the part of the government would be in future. The author further speculated that in the face of stiff attitude put forth by the government the Akalis might aspire for the policy of violence.

In the seventh chapter the author explained how had the nationalist leadership mobilize support for the political system and discussed in detail about the strength of the Congress party in Punjab politics by quoting the statistics of the three elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962. He further re-counted several factors for the popular support given to the Congress party.

1. The very nature and status of the Congress party. Being a secular, broad-based party of an all India character, having the strongest political machinery in India.
2. The control over the state government by the Congress party provides with an opportunity to utilise government resources to enhance its political position.
3. Then there is the Congress party's dedication to economic development and planning. Among the different parties in the Punjab the Congress Party alone has an economic programme.
4. The strategy of Coalition-building among various social groups - and it employed several important instruments in doing so-(a) pol. concession, (b) co-option of leaders and members of other groups, (c) assurance of protection to some groups, (d) economic benefits, (e) patronage.

The party's control over the State Government since independence has helped it to make effective use of these instruments.

In the end the author tries to draw some lessons for the language question of national unity in India from the study of the Punjab. He explains that the general literature on Indian politics usually lists and describes in the study of prospects for political stability and national unity - the various cleavages in Indian society and discusses the disintegrative effects of each cleavage for Indian unity, but does not examine the dynamic relationship between the cleavages themselves. *Thus the linguistic regions are held to be potential bases for secessionist movements* and at the same time caste is considered disintegrative of Indian society. The political pressures resulting

from loyalty to both language and caste, it is suggested, tend to the inevitable balkanization of India. Since language divides society, and so does caste, it is assumed that the two together present a graver danger to national unity than each by itself would.

The author is of the opinion that while studying different cleavages, one should examine the relationship between them and ask whether there is a superimposition "Congruence or dissociation" among different conflicting groups. Where conflicting groups are dissociated, or they cross-cut each other, the intensity of conflict will be less than where they are superimposed on each other. It is in this context that one should examine the various cleavages in Indian society in relation to the question of the viability of the Indian nation, and it is here that the study of the Punjab is instructive.

In inquiring into the demand for a Punjabi speaking state we found that the population which spoke Punjabi split along religious lines. It may be argued that the Punjab is an exceptional case with the presence of two religious groups. But even more significant that the split along religious lines is the division within the Sikh community between Harijan and non-Harijan Sikhs, with the Harijan Sikhs opposing the demand for Punjabi Suba because of their fear of complete domination by the non-Harijan Sikhs in a smaller state. The non-Harijan Sikhs are further divided into Jat and non-Jat which division also is of some importance in the politics of the Punjab.

In other words, one does not find in the Punjab any over all loyalty to the region as against the centre. Instead there are divisions and while some may desire greater autonomy or even separation, others resist such demands and look to the centre for support. Although the split along religious lines may be peculiar to the Punjab. The cleavage along the caste lines is of universal significance in India. At any rate, loyalty to a linguistic region is cut across by religions and caste as well as by class. The linguistic region therefore does not present a united front against the centre but, on the contrary constantly seeks the latter's intervention in order to moderate the conflict between the various groups within the region. *The presence of great variety of interests in a society of diversity means, that is, it is difficult for any single group or coalition to achieve a permanent majority.* The large number of interests assures that the threat of domination by any single group or coalition would call into play other interest to check such a threat. If a society were divided merely into two unequal groups, the minority is likely to be dominated by the majority. On the other hand, in a society of greater diversity, a minority would have the opportunity to combine with other groups to restrain the ambitions of any group aspiring to domination.

In a society of greater diversity numbers are apt to belong to many different groups. The very multiplicity of membership in groups would prevent the expenditure of energy in a single mass movement. Moreover, groups in conflict may have overlapping membership which would serve to

reduce the intensity of group conflict.

The fact that India encompasses great diversity within itself should therefore, far from being made into a cause for grave concern, be recognised as a condition necessary for the functioning of the present democratic system.

Conclusion

In the end I am to say that the book is a product of patient research and marked scholarship and the author had dealt in details about political parties, political leadership, socio-economic structures, and relations of the state with the centre. But there is one aspect on which the study does not throw much light i.e. the socio-psychological under currents which actually influenced the people in the formation of their political ideas. The author claims to have undertaken a field survey from 1961-63 but he does not mention anything regarding the behaviour of the people towards the issues involved in the election of 1962.

Krishan Gopal

Lecturer in History,
S.R.P.A.A.B. College,
Pathankot.

BOOK-REVIEW-II

***Peasants in India's Non-Violent Revolution - Practice and Theory*, by Mridula Mukherjee, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, Pages 577, Price Rs.980.**

In the recent past, a fresh trend in the domain of historical studies has developed, wherein sharp focus is being laid on the subjects which share a very broad common historiographic base. One of such fields of historic focus has been the peasant movements in the different agrarian settings throughout the world.

The book under review entitled '*Peasants in India's Non Violent Revolution*, by Mridula Mukherjee is a valuable addition to the scanty list of books which address and cover this complex problem of peasant involvement in the India's National Struggle. This excellently produced volume is a major intervention in theoretical debates regarding the role of peasants in revolutionary transformations in the modern world. It does so from the vantage-point of the Indian anti-colonial national revolution - a revolution based on a strategy of non-violent action in which the central role was assigned to peasants. The author with all scholastic merit identifies all those forces, which in distinctive Indian agrarian setting, shaped the non-violent character of the Indian peasant struggle.

The study does not take cognizance of different theoretical models in finality, instead, the author, subjects to critical scrutiny a wide range of framework used for analyzing peasant consciousness and behaviour. Without questioning the validity and functionality of theoretical models, she however, argues that established theoretical models cannot be applied with same degree of uniformity without taking note of situational differences. In the author's own words:

"Models built on the basis of an analysis of certain kinds of group behaviour may well in useful tools to comprehend the activities of broadly similar groups in broadly similar conditions. However, it is as possible to question the validity of a model devised to explain the behaviour of multinational industrial entrepreneurs in the late twentieth century, being used to study the early British industrialists of the eighteenth century." She maintains that the varied theories can attain legitimacy only when modified to accommodate varied shades of ethos, psyche and cultural codes.

The author attacks vehemently at the framework offered by the Subaltern school of historical studies. The book also questions certain elements of the Marxist understanding of the peasantry, while appreciating

many of its profound insights, within a Marxist Theoretical framework. The author offers a plausible explanation that due to the absence of a separate independent perspective of development, the peasantry, as class could not avoid its periodic amalgamation with other forces like working class or industrial labour to transform themselves into an effective independent system.

The author holds that the actual political practice of the Indian peasants, represents one sixth of humanity, refuses to fit into the theoretical straight jackets provided for it and demands new theoretical and methodological space, and some of which this study had sought to create in the chapter eleven entitled "Mapping Peasant Consciousness - Elements of an Alternative Framework."

The author situates the problem in an Indian context and explores various forces operating at different levels which shaped the fabric of peasant consciousness and subsequently its application in non-violent form and manner.

The theoretical arguments carried throughout the work never seem to be made in isolation. The author at no place seems to be outwitted by the skills of western scholarship which designs its own constructs to understand systems, structures, institutions, ideologies and human mentality and behaviour pattern. She critically analyses the works of scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm, Eriwolf, Jean Chesneur, Lucien Bianco, James Scot, Thedo Skocpol, Thoder Shanin and Barrington Moore, who have made important contributions to peasant historiography. The study rejects the widely prevalent notion that peasants consciousness remains traditional even when they indulge in revolutionary action and the writer argues that they can and do indeed acquire in the Indian case, a modern anti-colonial, democratic and even class consciousness.

Alongside the use of the wide variety of theoretical alternatives for understanding various shades of peasant consciousness, mode of protest in the Indian setting, the author equally explores the relevance of new set of evidences for reconstructing the peasant history of the country. This new set of source material ranges from conventional archival material to that of Oral evidence in the form of interviews with the actors and activists who played active role in the drama of peasant revolution. This undocumented source material has proved extremely helpful not only for supplementing factual information about movements not adequately documented in written sources, but especially for aspects such as ideology, consciousness, social origins of participants methods of grass roots mobilization, etc., on which inevitably written sources are far from adequate.

The work under debate is divided into two broader divisions. The first part of the book focuses sharply on a major Indian province, Punjab, and narrates in detail the actual political practice of the peasants in the era

of the freedom struggle. The discussion on historiography is arranged thematically in Book-II in chapter eighth to thirteenth.

In the first part of the Book, the author covers different dimensions of peasant life in action, comprising both the heroic struggle as well as less significant day-to-day politics of peasants. It narrates both folk as well as national dimensions of their struggle. The author dispassionately records the role and contribution of geometrically opposite political and ideological schools and currents, which at different stages shaped and modified their political behaviour. The chapters in Book-I also acquaint the reader with the historical background which unravels the story of peasant protest in the colonial period to 1925. This part of the book also offers new insights into as how the peasants developed new links, absorbed new ideas, gained new confidence, and learned new methods under the influence of varied phases like Non-cooperation Movement, and Civil Disobedience Movement launched under major political party of the national movement. The Book-I also looks at the politics of the agrarian legislation initiated by the Unionist ministry during 1938-39 which marked the high watermark of peasant struggle in the Punjab, as it did in many other provinces. The author in Chapter-7 of the Book-I gives a vivid picture of Patiala Peasant Struggle - a princely state with divergent autocratic state political structure. This according to author proved helpful in a delineation of the variables that influence the choice of modes and forms of protest.

In the second part of the book the author addresses issues of theory, in the light of the political experience of the Punjab peasants, such as the relationship between peasants, peasant movements and the national movement, forms of protest and methods of mobilization, social origins of leaders and participants, peasant consciousness, etc. Chapter 9 and 12 of the Book-II constitute the soul of the work. In these chapters author examines the debate around the issues of violence and non-violence and presents a detailed account of the forms of struggle and methods of mobilization adopted by peasants. The author equally questions the assumption of Marxist and Subaltern theorists who believe that violence is equal to revolutionaries and its adoption or use is proof of the existence of revolutionary objectives and intentions.

The author strongly refutes subaltern argument that the choice of forms of struggle is shaped by class connection - (elite or subaltern connection) and argues that the choice of forms of struggle or protest, whether violent or non-violent, legal or illegal, constitutional or non-constitutional is basically determined neither by one's position in the social hierarchy, nor even by the nature of demands one is making on the system. Instead, the choice is largely determined by, or is linked, to the nature of the political structures of the state in which one is operating. She further maintains that it is the kind of power apparatus, that is, its capacity to

repress, its administrative efficiency and the force at its command, that influences and determines the nature of forms of protest. The author to the reader's surprise gives citations from foreign political structures like those operative in China, Korea, Philippines etc.

The author while debating on the forms of struggle and methods of mobilization strongly holds that the peasant movements in India barring few stray references were of non-violent nature. She argues that it was not based either on an underground network of organization or on jacqueries or guerilla struggle or on secret societies, or on a "Red Army", or on conspiratorial action. Even when the communist component of its leadership was operating under a ban, as it was between 1934 and 1942, in the movement it functioned openly, as a part of the Congress.

In the last chapter, the author, strongly refutes the dominant notion about the impossibility of the transformation of the cautiousness of the peasants and by examining the actual political practice of the Indian peasantry suggests that Indian peasantry underwent the process of transformation and it is this reality which shaped its theoretical possibility.

The book under view is really of great historical importance and is likely to obtain a monumental place in the field of peasant historiography in India. But the inclusion of movements exclusively based on communal ideologies within the ambit of Nationalist Construct and referring them in the phraseology of Hindu Nationalism and Muslim Nationalism, shall be taken as a symbol of legitimacy by their advocates and supporters. The feeling or concept of nationalism is centrally woven around the greater goodwill, love and integration of the masses. Communalism whether Hindu or Muslim in form and character negates this essence and hence could not be accommodated within a plausible expression of nationalism.

Further, selecting political world of peasants of Punjab for analysis, limits the scope of the work. No doubt, the region has occupied centre stage in the story of Indian agricultural development, but there were equally other important zones and regions in India, which witnessed greater degree of peasant unrest during the anti-colonial period. Had the study been analyzed in all India peasant perspective it would have surely enlarged its canvas and academic merit.

Farooq Fayaz
P.G. Deptt. of History
University of Kashmir,
Srinagar-196006.

BOOK-REVIEW-III

***Scramble For Punjab Waters*, by Gurdev Singh, Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, Pages 76, Price Rs.50.**

The essence of history is to provide directions or guidelines to the posterity in order not to repeat follies of the individuals against humanity. Unfortunately, it is again history which informs that the individuals rarely care for or show any respect to history; and, they not only perpetuate their foolish actions against society in general but also thwart the very purpose of 'history'. Hence its futility!

The work under consideration appears to reveal the above statement that certain elements of power construct an issue of history to serve their own narrow political ends and by the denial of any process of justice to those against whom they enact the drama. Not only these power centres discriminate against a section of population but also succeed to utilize the state machinery including the judiciary and the constitution itself, in their ventures of revenge. However, in the process, alongwith the sufferers they very often themselves fall pray to it.

The author has touched upon a very sensitive issue, which, since Independence, the people of this region have to confront. He has drawn attention that how and why this unjustified and unconstitutional scramble for Punjab waters was politically constructed, alongwith its stages of evolution, parties involved and above all its wider socio-economic and political ramifications. Yet the solution remains invisible in the womb of history.

It critically examines multi-faceted nuances of riparian waters problems, especially those of Ravi, Beas and Satluj, whose waters are sought to be carried to non-riparian territories. In this context, political blunders were committed in 1955, 1966, 1981, 1985 and in 1987. One fundamental commonality underlying in these agreements is that these were designated against the state of Punjab.

The reactions to such draconian injustices was a natural corollary. It led the state of Punjab into turmoil for a much longer period with a very heavy cost both of men and material. And yet it was not enough. Certain other pending issues including the transfer of capital, separate High Court, control of Punjab's dams, hydropower plants, and a crippled Punjabi Suba with tight leash from Delhi merely added fire to the fuel.

These developments against a particular region and population have given currency to this idea, that they are being discriminated, with perpetual suppression, in the form of threat to eliminate their very identity: social,

suppression, in the form of threat to eliminate their very identity: social, cultural, economic and political. The consolidation of such views of alienation and bigotry will provide basis for the emergence of eventual historical developments, if the contemporary authority shows no respect for its 'history'.

Navtej Singh

Reader and Head,

Department of Punjab Historical Studies,

Punjabi University, Patiala.